

**THE POLITICS OF DIVINITY IN THE KATHMANDU VALLEY:
THE FESTIVAL OF BUNGADYA/RATO MATSYENDRANATH**

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ABSTRACT

THE POLITICS OF DIVINITY IN THE KATHMANDU VALLEY:

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Bruce McCoy Owens

The annual festival of Bungadya/Rato Matsyendranath in the Kathmandu valley of Nepal brings together thousands of devotees of different castes, faiths, ethnicities, and localities in honoring one of Nepal's most important deities. This dissertation uses this festival as a vantage point from which to study Newar culture and society. Ethnography confined to specific locales within the Kathmandu valley has revealed the Newar to be a remarkably diverse people with respect to religious beliefs, caste structures, and almost every other dimension of social life. This study examines the variety of beliefs and practices which concern Bungadya in order to document the complex ritual cycle honoring this popular god, and to discern fundamental features of Newar religious belief and practice.

Three areas of broad theoretical concern are central to the thesis. The first concerns the problem of acknowledging diverse beliefs within a stratified society while accurately describing a "belief system" which its various members share. The concept of syncretism is critically reviewed here, as is the distinction between "great" and "folk" traditions.

The second theoretical issue concerns the politics of sacrifice. Numerous blood sacrifices, officiated over by Buddhist priests, are offered as integral elements of festivities honoring a god whom many Buddhists revere as a benevolent Bodhisattva. The importance of sacrifice in Newar Buddhist ritual is demonstrated in this festival and elsewhere,

and prompts a consideration of the relationship between Newar Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhist orthopraxy.

Thirdly, the relationships between king, subjects, and gods revealed in beliefs and practices associated with Bungadya and other deities call into question Dumontian theories of caste and the Hindu kingdom. The dissociation between divine status and secular power postulated by Dumont is contradicted by evidence presented here.

These interrelated issues are central to the politics of divinity in the Kathmandu valley. This examination of the roles gods play in peoples' lives and how the nature of peoples' lives shape their beliefs about the god they honor, suggests that Bungadya is not uniquely multivalent. The coexistence of conflicting interpretations within a society, animated by differing access to power, is to be anticipated rather than ignored.

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PREFACE

This dissertation contains many foreign words, mostly Newari, in order to preserve accuracy and provide ethnographic detail. Proper names, place names, and foreign words which have been incorporated into the English vocabulary, have not generally been written with diacritic marks. Sanskrit names of deities or places are rendered with diacritics if only occasionally used or obscure. The use of diacritics follows the convention employed by *The Journal of Asian Studies*.

Though the spelling of Newari words is far from standardized, recently published dictionaries offer a guide. I have chosen the Newari-Newari dictionary of Saiya Mohan Joshi (1987), because of its relative comprehensiveness, as a standard for this work. For details concerning the method of transcription used here, see the forward to the glossary provided at the end of this dissertation.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

This is a study of the religion of the Newar of the Kathmandu valley as viewed from the vantage point of their largest festival. The Newar are frequently described as the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley, an area with a local historical record extending back to the fifth century. The term Newar, however, has come to describe an ethnic group only in the last three centuries. Though the Newar and their ancestors are properly identified with the complex urban civilization of the valley, the notion that they are "indigenous" belies the complexity of their heritage, an issue which will be examined in these pages.

Foreigners and non-Newar Nepalese are apt to characterize the Newar as absorbed in religious festivity, for it is rare that a week goes by during which Newars do not celebrate a public festival. Nearly every foreign observer of the Kathmandu valley civilization has commented on the diversity of religious beliefs and practices that its people embrace and that are manifested in these public celebrations. Through the festival of Bungadya, this study will focus on this diversity of belief and practice in the light of two other aspects of Newar society; it is a highly stratified caste society ruled by a divine monarch.

Several of the terms in the title of this dissertation, like the festival which it describes, may be interpreted in various ways. The term "politics" has many meanings, and it is intended here to convey most, if not all of them. The policies of government, the tactics involved in managing a state (or obtaining control of one), and factional intrigue, are all things which will be examined with reference to divinity. The term divinity refers here not only to gods, but to that quality which can make humans like gods. Finally, as the two names included in the title

suggest, the god which is the focus of this study has many different identities and means many different things to many different people.

Ethnographic Setting

Most of the research on the complex society of the Newar has focussed on particular geographically or socially defined units of proportions which are manageable within the constraints of traditional ethnography. This same research collectively reveals substantial diversity among the Newar with respect not only to their religious beliefs and practices, but their societal structure and social mores as well.

This study seeks to understand the religion of the Newar in the light of this diversity. Much of what is commonly described as religious belief is articulated within a framework of reciprocal obligations between gods and humans and the access to power which their fulfillment entails. The Newar and their gods have the potential to be mutually coercive: ritual can empower people to control gods as well as propitiate them. These relationships of power and subordination pertain to subjects and kings as well as the gods they worship.

It is an hypothesis of this research that the religious diversity so often alluded to is animated by differences in access to power which, whether divine or temporal, entails obligations between kings, gods, priests and laypeople¹ in all their possible combinations and permutations. The term power is used here to denote many different kinds of control or influence, whether over ones own

¹"Laity" and "laypeople" are used throughout this dissertation to refer to those who are neither priests nor kings. It is a somewhat problematic term precisely because many of those who are not ritual practitioners *per se* do in fact preside over rituals which they perform for the benefit of others as well as themselves.

condition or the condition of others, these "others" being either human or divine.² Members of every sphere of Newar society possess religious expertise (and therefore power) that is unknown to even the most learned priest. Rather than taking recourse to "higher" or more orthodox authority to resolve the differences between the beliefs laity espouse, this study makes these differences an object of its inquiry.

It is essential that we understand the diversity of perspectives which make the system of symbols we call "religion" meaningful for its proponents in order to understand the system itself, a system which encompasses tremendous diversity and apparent contradictions. Therefore this study centers on one sphere of activity and belief which involves nearly every segment of Newar society, including their current King and, symbolically, their kings of the past.

The worship and lore of Bungadya seem to engage the attention and concern of most Newar and have been important features of their culture for at least 1,000 years. Hundreds of Newar men and women annually honor traditional obligations to provide services which are essential to the annual procession festival, or *jātrā* of Bungadya which is the focus of this study. These obligations often entail large amounts of time and labor and/or money, and may require fundamental changes in the participant's day-to-day routine for extended periods of time. This *jātrā* and the preparations for it extend over an eight month period, with the actual procession festival usually lasting at least one month. The *jātrā* is punctuated by over one hundred major ritual events, many of which have numerous components

²"Condition" here may refer to a spiritual state, such as that achieved through meditation, or a material state, referring to health, wealth, or other tangibles.

and last several hours or more.³ The annual preparations for the *jātrā* include bathing and renewing the image and constructing the god's chariot which towers over sixty feet high and houses the image of Bungadya during the procession. Thousands come to the *jātrā* to make offerings or to help pull the massive chariot along its traditional route, a task which usually requires the efforts of at least two hundred people.

An important reason for choosing Bungadya as the center of this study is that this god is worshipped by not only the Newar but by other ethnic groups as well. It is the focus of one arena of activity in which both Newar and non-Newar are involved, responding in different ways to one situation. Just as individual segments within Newar society, be they *jāts*, clans, or voluntary associations, define themselves partly by comparison with other Newar social groups, so do the Newar define themselves in terms of salient characteristics which distinguish them from other ethnic groups. The devotional activities which surround Bungadya provide a particularly valuable perspective on Newar society because they also involve those who are not Newars.

Theoretical Issues

Prior work on Newar religion has revealed the need for further ethnographic study in this area. Three major areas of theoretical concern in the study of religion also motivated this choice of subject for research. These areas can broadly be defined as; the problem of multiple interpretation within a culture, be it with respect to the multiple identities of a god or the diverse meanings of events or symbols;

³Most of these events are outlined briefly in Appendix A.

the politics of sacrifice; and the tension between divine power and secular authority. These problems are all parts of a larger issue, alluded to above, which may be referred to as the politics of divinity: the ways in which relationships between laymen, priests, kings, and gods are interdependent and defined with respect to one another.

Multiple Interpretations: "Belief systems" in stratified society

Before defining this theoretical issue more precisely, it is essential to note that the stratification of society is by no means a precondition for a multitude of interpretations of a given event or thing being shared or disputed within any social group. Stratified societies simply make it more difficult to ignore the problem posed by differences of opinion.

Secondly, all social groups capable of reproducing themselves are intrinsically stratified at the most fundamental level; they consist of men and women. Though it is now rare for anthropologists to rely solely upon the opinions of males to reveal beliefs held by all members of a society, it is also rare to find that this fundamental difference in orientation between men and woman is adequately acknowledged in exegeses of belief systems.

Apart from an admission of guilt, this study is no exception to this generality. Though the Newar are unusual among South Asian caste societies in that women and men (including the foreign anthropologist) may interact with relative freedom, I had no female counterpart, therefore my knowledge is based more on the confidences of men than women; I cannot provide a balanced view. Fortunately, many of the women who play key roles in the *jātrā* were quite ready to talk with me, often in the privacy of their own homes unaccompanied by their spouses; a situation quite unimaginable in much of South Asia. One such woman, whose role

was passed from mother to daughter or sister, provided a powerful example of sexual differentiation in ritual interpretation which will be examined in depth.

To return to the issue which prompted this confessional caveat, how do we characterize the belief system which defines a culture while adequately acknowledging the diversity within it? Perhaps the most commonly encountered instance of this problem is the attribution of multiple identities to a single god. The form of this "multivocality" with which the Christian tradition is most familiar consists of the encompassment by one deity of a multitude of others, the former being hierarchically superior in some sense to the latter. A deity may also be recognized in numerous different forms: in essence the same, though varied in aspect, without hierarchical differentiation. Finally, an image or object may be simultaneously regarded as having numerous distinct identities. These identities may be simultaneously apprehended by one individual, or they may be a source of debate among individuals of differing opinions.

For all but the last case, anthropology has developed theoretical frameworks which facilitate (or at least lend credibility to) their analyses. The "syncretism" of "folk" religion is a concept frequently evoked to "explain" gods which encompass multiple identities or the portrayal of gods with multiple forms. The anthropologist is less equipped to deal with divergences of opinion within a culture concerning the identity of a deity or symbol, or the assignation of multiple identities to one deity, particularly when these different identities evoke responses which appear mutually contradictory.

This problem is particularly important in understanding observances to Bungadya in which a devotee will relate to one image in very different ways depending upon the particular identity of the deity he or she recognizes as

important at the moment. The image known as Bungadya is referred to by many different names depending on the individual speaking and the context in which the reference is made. These different identities of a single image, particularly those attributed to the god here referred to as Bungadya, can evoke apparently contradictory responses. The most extreme examples of this which occur in the worship of Bungadya are the sacrifices performed in the course of his annual *jātrā*.

The Politics of Sacrifice

Ritual sacrifice has long been an object of fascination for the anthropologist. Many theoretical perspectives have been pressed beyond the limits of credibility in attempts to account for the most intrinsically interesting of all sacrifice: human sacrifice (cf. Harner, Harris etc.). In one of the earliest sociological attempts to deal with sacrifice, Hubert and Mauss, in their seminal work "*Essai sur la nature et les fonctions du sacrifice*," pointed out the fundamental tension which exists between the efficacy of the ultimate gift to the gods, oneself, and the problem of reaping the earthly benefits of such generosity. Many sacrificial rites explicitly refer to this basic problem of the sacrificial offering, and the Newar sacrifices are no exception in this regard.

Sacrifice in the South Asian context involves other issues of particular importance to this study. The most striking aspect of sacrifice offered in conjunction with observances to Bungadya is that more than 35 animals are killed during the annual *jātrā* of a god who is widely identified with compassion and *ahimsa*, the principal of non-violence. This may be considered a logical consequence of Bungadya being identified not only as a compassionate blood-abhorring *bodhisattva*, but as the son of a demoness as well.

The identification of the sacrificer with the sacrificed is complicated in the

South Asian context, particularly among Buddhists, because of this ideal of *ahimsa*. The individual wielding the knife is most often not the one actually making the offering, and the individual making the offering is often not the one conducting the ritual of which the offering is a part. This allocation of responsibility can be seen as linked to the necessity of association with the intention of sacrifice coupled with the need to distance oneself from the act. The distinction, first elucidated by Hubert and Mauss (1899, reprinted 1964), between "sacrifier, sacrificed, and sacrificer," is of particular importance here if we are to unravel relationships between gods and humans as revealed through ritual.

Once sacrificed, the offering becomes food. Here again, the perspective on society offered by ritual is poignant, for the food is allocated to gods, priests, and laymen in precisely specified ways. The sharing of food in caste societies is particularly charged with meaning, thus magnifying the importance of a thorough understanding of sacrifice, for sacrifice is virtually synonymous with feasting among the Newar.

The necessity of sacrifice and the capacity to perform it form basic elements of the caste system from the point of view of many authors on the subject, the most eminent among modern theorists being Louis Dumont. The complementarity of the roles of the Brahmin and (*Kṣatriya*) King is attributed not only to the duty of the King to militarily defend his kingdom and the Brahmin to remain free of the impurity which such work entails, but also to the need for the King to demand sacrifices which he is not qualified to perform. Representatives of the King of Nepal often attend the sacrifices performed during the *jātrā*. They share with their Buddhist priests, however, the impossibility of self sufficiency, for just as the King is unqualified to offer a sacrifice on his own behalf, so must the Buddhist priest rely

on someone of another caste to actually shed the blood required.

Divine Power and Secular Authority

Nepal offers a unique opportunity to examine the relationship between a Hindu King and the gods which both protect and threaten his kingdom, for it is the only nation in the world which is also a Hindu Kingdom. The clear complementary relationship between brahmin and king described by Dumont (1980) becomes muddled not only in the context of the *jātrā* sacrifices, but in other features of the worship of Bungadya which have broader theoretical implications. The monarch of Nepal enjoys access to important divinities which is not mediated by the Brahmin. Royal access to some divinities is mediated by Buddhist priests, and to others not mediated at all. This access not only empowers the king, but also renders him vulnerable.

Toffin (1979, 1986) has described two distinct divine sources of royal power for the Newar kings; one entails the mediation of a Brahmin, the other does not. The beliefs about the *jātrā* include explicit references to both kinds of relationships between kings and gods. Both the evidence supplied by Toffin and that provided by the worship of Bungadya draw attention to the consequences of divine sources of power and the vulnerability they entail.

The legitimacy of royal authority is in part based on identification with divinity; the King of Nepal is regarded as Vishnu incarnate. This legitimacy is also based on the king's special access to gods, exemplified by the origin myth of the *jātrā* which relates how the King of Nepal brought the god to his kingdom to relieve the country from prolonged drought. The favor of Bungadya is ultimately the responsibility of the King, and it is the King who is believed to be the first to suffer the consequences of the god's disfavor.

Linked with this notion is the tradition of Nepalese kings expressing their extreme subservience to gods as a means of enhancing their stature among men. Numerous inscriptions describe the king they glorify as "favored by the feet" of a god (Slusser:1982:26). Touching another's feet, whether they are those of one's guru, elder clan member, or husband, is a common means of expressing subservience and respect, and is an important aspect of devotion to Bungadya as practiced by kings and subjects alike.

The Politics of Divinity

In the context of Newar culture, it is difficult to discuss any one of the three broad theoretical issues outlined above without discussing the other two. In the context of the worship of Bungadya, it is nearly impossible. To discuss the multiple interpretations and diversity of beliefs (which are difficult to ignore in the *jātrā*) in relation to social status and stratification demands an assessment of the relationship between the King and gods. The most striking example of the multiple identities of a divinity and the apparent contradictions this may entail is provided by the many sacrifices offered in conjunction with the worship of a compassionate god.

Sacrifice is clearly an important component of the *jātrā*, and any serious study of these sacrifices must examine the role of the king as sacrificer. Finally, the very beginnings of the cult and festival of Bungadya are attributed to a King bringing the god to the valley in response to his subjects' need for rainfall. Vital to the expedition were not only the King, but a priest and farmer; Newar society in microcosm. A serpent deity is also essential to the expedition, compelled to join by the tantric powers of the priest. Thus the very myth of origin of the *jātrā* suggests that the politics of divinity guide its course and inform the many different

beliefs which it inspires. The issues outlined above animate not only the *jātrā*, but Newar culture in general.

The Scope of Field Research

Bungadya is the only god in the Kathmandu valley who has two separate temple residences located in two different settlements.⁴ One is in Patan, a city of 59,000 located three miles south of Kathmandu across the Bagmati river, and the other is in Bungamati, a village of 3,000 situated approximately three miles further South on a ridge between the Bagmati and Nakhu rivers. Normally, Bungadya is brought in procession from Bungamati to Patan just before the winter solstice, astrologers determining the precise date each year. The god then stays in Patan through the conclusion of the *jātrā* five or six months later, at which time he is brought in a palanquin back to Bungamati where he stays until the auspicious moment for returning to Patan. Once every twelve years the god remains in Bungamati until the *rath jātrā*, which is then celebrated in expanded form, carrying the god to and from Patan along a much longer and more difficult route.⁵

Most of the principal participants in the festival of Bungadya live in Patan, with two important exceptions, the *pānjus* (priest attendants to Bungadya) and *suwa:s* (a sub-caste of farmers who cook and perform other special ritual

⁴Toffin (1984:76, 82, note 17) notes that the two residences of Nikunja Mahadev of Pyangaon may have been established in imitation of Bungadya. These are, however, located in the same village and are of strictly local significance.

⁵Twelve year intervals between major religious festivals are quite common throughout the subcontinent. The last twelve-year *jātrā* of Bungadya was held in 1979.

functions) who live in Bungamati.⁶ This dual residence of Bungadya made it necessary to include both Patan and Bungamati as research sites.

In addition to these two localities I visited many other places in the valley in the course of my research. Major deities in the Kathmandu valley are frequently conceptualized as occurring in groupings of four; Ganesh, Bhairab, Bhimsen, and others are all represented in four major sites. Bungadya is identified as one of the *pengu thay Lokeśwar*, or "Lokeśwars of the four places." These three other *Lokeśwars* are also considered Matsyendranaths⁷ and are connected in myth and history with the cult of Bungadya. It was therefore important to conduct research at the sites of their temples and observe their annual observances. I studied the activities and beliefs which surround five *Lokeśwars*, for there are two alternate candidates for one of the group of four.

Two of these five *Lokeśwars* are located in Patan. In addition to Bungadya, another *Lokeśwar*, commonly referred to as Cakwadya⁸, is honored in the same

⁶In fact, not all the *pānjus* actually live in Bungamati, there being three who now live near Cobar, approximately 4 miles to the northwest of Bungamati, evidently as a result of a dispute over the ownership of land located there.

⁷Though all of these deities are collectively referred to as the "four Matsyendranaths" by both Newars and non-Newars, only Janmadya of Kathmandu and Bungadya are routinely referred to individually as Matsyendranath. Minnath, Seto Matsyendranath, and Rato Matsyendranath not only share the "nath" (lord) suffix, commonly used in South Asia, but are also the only three of these gods whose devotees include many non-Newars, and who have large *rath jātrās*. It is, perhaps, because of their popularity among non-Newars that Newars also acknowledge the identity of Cakwadya with Minnath and Janmadya and Bungadya with Matsyendranath.

⁸Locke (1980:373) gives this name as Caku baha dya, though notes that Nepali (1965:371) gives the name as Cakwadya. Though it is true, as Locke explains that *cāku*, a kind of molasses, is offered to Cakwadya, so is it offered to all of the *Lokeśwars* and many other deities, making this an unlikely feature for tradition to
(continued...)

rath jātrā and resides in an important temple only a few hundred yards from Bungadya's Patan shrine. One *Lokeśwar* considered to be one of these *pengu taye Lokeśwars* resides in a major temple in central Kathmandu. Also known as the *Seṭo* ("white") Matsyendranath and "Janmadya", this god is honored by an annual *rath jātrā* similar to that of Bungadya. A second *Lokeśwar* of particular importance to the Buddhists of Kathmandu is known as Cobahadya, located in the small hamlet of Cobaha which takes its name from the *bāhā* in which this god is located. Finally, another *Lokeśwar* which takes its popular name from its place of residence is Naladya, located in the town of Nala near Banepa, about nine miles due East of Patan. These five gods are compared in myth and their relative status is a subject of debate, making it essential that my research include all of them.

The annual ritual cycles for these gods are similar, though they vary in important respects. I observed the annual festival and as much of the annual ritual cycle as possible for all five of these *Lokeśwars*. The annual ritual cycle of Cakwadya is interwoven with that of Bungadya, and Cakwadya's *jātrā* can be considered part of the *rath jātrā* of Bungadya. The *jātrās* occur in rapid succession starting with Naladya's *jātrā* at the end of March and concluding with Bungadya's *jātrā*, the duration of which varies from year to year. These *jātrās* overlap slightly, compounding the necessity of witnessing the *jātrās* several times. Comparing these *jātrās* enabled me to discern distinctive features of the cult of Bungadya from

⁸(...continued)

grasp as distinctive. The myth of origin of the *bāhā* in which Cakwadya is located involves a sparrow, or *cakhumca*, and informants gave me this reason for the name of the Bahā and its god. Though both explanations may be current, I suspect the former is a "folk etymology" which is shared by fewer Newars than the latter version. Though romanized slightly differently, the transcription used here echoes Nepali's.

general beliefs and practices which pertain to all of these gods. Each *jātrā* elaborates on or emphasizes different elements. The most popular portion of Cobahadya's *jātrā* is the river *pujā*⁹ which attracts thousands of devotees. In Nala the *ihī pujā* portion of the life cycle rites (*daśa karma pujā*) administered to Naladya each year is distinctively elaborate. Only there are young girls initiated simultaneously with the god. Some portions of ritual were hidden from view in one *jātrā* but public in others. The procession of the bathed god in Cobaha is a public affair, whereas in Patan it is secret. Though using one *jātrā* as a basis for understanding another is potentially risky, it is a strategy suggested by the priestly officiants who tend to cast aspersions on the rituals performed in the *jātrās* of the other *Lokeśwars*, suggesting that their own practices are more orthodox or more elaborate.¹⁰ These comparisons served as excellent bases for formulating relevant questions, if not for deriving their answers.

I arrived in Nepal in March of 1982, shortly before the start of the *rath jātrā* of Janmadya in Kathmandu. Initially I lived in Kathmandu in order to witness this *jātrā*, and moved to Patan in time for *jātrā* of Bungadya. I left the field just after the conclusion of the *rath jātrā* for Bungadya in September of 1984, permitting me to witness each of the *jātrās* in Kathmandu, Cobar, and Patan three times, and that

⁹See Appendix A, *Dila dyā: pujā*, for comparison with Bungadya's river *pujā*.

¹⁰Locke (1980) chose to concentrate on the cult of Seto Matsyendranath in order to elucidate the cult of "Karunamaya," an epithet applied to all four of these *Lokeśwars* (excluding Cakwadya, whose identification with Hyemraj may render this association inappropriate) because of the orthodoxy of the priests at Jana Baha. A good case could be made for focussing on the cult of Cobahadya for the same reasons, coupled with the fact the Cobahadya is said to have had a *jātrā* prior to the coming of Bungadya. The *Vājrcāryas* who perform the rituals for Cobahadya belittle the rituals conducted by the Bungamati *pānjus*, saying that they are performed too quickly, without sufficient attention to detail.

of Nala twice; an ostensible luxury which proved essential for several reasons.

By virtue of this extended stay I was better able to discern the exceptional from the routine, for three *jātrās* presented more opportunities for the exceptional to occur. This was particularly important due to the symbolic significance of mishaps during these festivals. Moreover, in the course of one *jātrā* several important events occur simultaneously in different places, making it impossible to observe all pertinent happenings in the course of just one or even two *jātrās*. Finally, as noted above, the four *jātrās* overlap slightly, making it necessary on occasion to choose between observing different *jātrās*. These factors, peculiar to the circumstances of the *jātrās*, combined with the more obvious advantages of long-term research, such as the development of linguistic competence and expansion of social networks, made the extended duration of my stay absolutely vital for the fulfillment of my research objectives.

Dissertation Overview

In addition to studying the ritual associated with these gods, I studied several other *jātrās* as well as aspects of Newar society and culture which were not specifically related to any ritual or deity. The following chapter concerning methodology discusses the strategy of using the worship of Bungadya as a focal point for the study of these other aspects of Newar culture and society. The third chapter discusses Newar society and culture in general terms in order to provide a context for a more detailed discussion of devotional practices associated with Bungadya.

The fourth chapter examines fundamental features of Newar beliefs concerning gods and interaction between humans and divinities. Chapter five considers the multiple identifications of Bungadya from an historical and synchronic

comparative perspective. This is followed by a descriptive overview of the major events of the annual festival of Bungadya and the preparations which lead up to it. The next chapter focusses on the repertoire of typical devotional practices which are associated with these major events. The eighth chapter describes several examples of traditional obligations to Bungadya in detail in order to elucidate principals which underlie the allocation of responsibility and privilege. This is followed by an examination of the relationship between Bungadya and the state, with particular reference to the obligations and powers of divine kings. Finally, the concluding chapter considers Newar religious beliefs in relation to differential access to power, both human and divine, and relates the findings of this research to broader theoretical concerns.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Previously Employed Methodological Strategies.

The methodology employed in this research differs from most strategies previously used in the study of Newar society. Several stand out as typical approaches to the study of Newar society in particular and, in many instances, ethnographic research in general. The following is a brief outline of approaches that have often been used to define fields of inquiry and obtain information in studies of Newar culture.

The "Pundit" as Authority

Much of what has been printed on the subject of Newar religion has been based at least in part on the expertise of a few articulate and learned Newar men, generally of high caste status. Many major works acknowledge the assistance, for example, of Mana Vajra Vajracarya, Gautam Vajracarya or Dhana Vajra Vajracarya of Kathmandu, all authors of their own publications. My gratitude to them is great for their own scholarship and their contributions to the work of others. I did not, however, seek their advice on Newar culture nor that of many other well-known authorities unless they were directly involved in the *jātrā* or were familiar with primary sources on the subject. I intentionally avoided the more general counsel of those who were accustomed to accommodating the needs of western scholars in making Newar society comprehensible.

The expertise I sought was of diverse origin and I wished to record faithfully and sensitively consider divergent points of view. I was interested in understanding Newar explanations unfettered by cultivated perceptions of the demands of my own "western" or academic orientation and unstifled by deference to local

authorities known to command wide respect. Many of these authorities are known and respected as pundits by the Newar community as well as by their foreign *jajmans*. The Newar tend to hold the guru in high respect, and will often defer to his opinion and wisdom. Though laymen are proud of their expertise concerning any specialized ritual minutiae which may be their provenance, it seems absurd to many of them to consult the commoner about more general issues concerning ritual if access to the "superior" wisdom of a well-known pandit is available. It was vital to establish my respect and interest in the opinions of those who were not known for their erudition in a society that has a high respect for the "pandit" or "guru" as the ultimate authority.

The *guru* also tends to hold himself in high regard, and may consider his role, usually perceived as that of an informant by the investigator, as a that of a colleague engaged in a cooperative endeavour. The latter is, most probably, the more accurate characterization in some cases. This difference of perception of the expert informant's role has led to bitter disputes concerning authorship of certain works and the unfaithfulness of the foreign investigator to the interpretations offered by the informant. A certain tyranny is wielded by the indigenous expertise proffered by the few experts whom many have consulted.

Part of this tyranny may result from a general impression that all *anusandhān* ("research", more literally, "investigation") is essentially historical inquiry. The first question posed by most Nepalese upon learning of my work was, "How old is the *jātrā* ?" Historical investigation, for many Nepalese scholars and the majority of laymen with whom I discussed these matters, is less of an interpretive art than a conclusive fact-finding enterprise. It is difficult to suggest

that alternative explanations may have some merit without giving the impression that one also embraces them as "the truth".

By the same token, the notion of historical fact, for many, accommodates what the western scholar would describe as legend as well as history. Though the written (thus, historical) record in Nepal begins in 464 A.D., *Vaṃsāvalis* record preceding dynasties and miraculous events involving deities and super-humans which occurred tens of thousands of years prior to this date. Even in chronicals concerning the historical period, accounts of miraculous events are interwoven with records of coronations and land grants. Inscriptions also demand critical interpretation; many are panegyrics more concerned with flattery than fact.

Perhaps it is because relatively few records of any kind are available to account for centuries of Nepalese history that the written word, particularly if written long ago, is often attributed more significance by Nepalese scholars than by their foreign counterparts. Western scholars are taught to regard evidence with skepticism, even if it supports their theory or point of view. Foreigners can more readily enjoy the luxury of a detached perspective than those whose history is being studied. Historical interpretation bears the burden of political implication almost anywhere, but this pressure is particularly felt in Nepal. This factor also contributes to the 'tyranny' of indigenous expertise, for the indigenous experts have more at stake when they interpret historical evidence.

Increased efforts at unifying the many ethnic groups of Nepal into a more manageable national polity have promoted the stance that any effort to understand

a particular ethnic group is divisive and anti-nationalistic.¹ Thus the "correctness" of a particular historical interpretation may be gauged in Nepai (and elsewhere) not only by the evidence, or by the desire to support abstract political or social theory, but by a concept of one's own identity. The apparently cavalier attitude of the western scholar towards the Nepalese informant's (or colleague's) offered interpretation may not only deny his scholarship, but his identity as well. The vitriolic *ad hominem* dispute between Kamal Prakash Malla and Mahesh Raj Pant, committed to print at their own expense in at least two privately printed pamphlets (Pant 1984, Malla 1984), is a perfect example of conflicting notions of history combined with conflicting political interests. This debate was prompted by a review by Prof. Malla of a foreign scholar's magnum opus on the history of the Kathmandu valley.² The prime issues which both protagonists seized upon concern the extent of Nepalese territory prior to the 18th Century, the origin and importance of the *Vikram Sambat* calendar (as opposed to the *Nepal Sambat*), and the prevalence of the Nepali language in the Kathmandu valley prior to Prithvinaryan's conquest.

¹This stance has been made official several times over the past two decades by the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies at Tribhuvan University. Research which specified particular non-Khas or *Pahāri* (i.e. Nepali speaking) groups for study has been discouraged unless they were primarily concerned with development issues of broader import. This center is the institution with which most foreign scholars are required to affiliate in order to obtain research visas. The rationale for discouraging foreign research on particular ethnic groups was explicitly related to national unity and the disintegrative impact such research was perceived as having (Todd Lewis, personal communication 7/1987).

²The historical sections of Mary Slusser's *Nepal Mandala*, published in 1982 by the Princeton University Press, are based largely on the work of a group of historians which include Mr. Pant and his father.

Though to the foreign scholar these may appear to be rather dry and academic questions of little concern for the general public, they are, in fact, key issues which provoke heated debate and large public demonstrations (cf. Gellner 1986). They concern the very essence of Newar identity and the role of non-Newars in the evolution of the Kathmandu valley culture. Any reading of contemporary work on these issues must be informed by the politics of historical interpretation current in Nepal. Any close association with scholars engaged in this discourse also bears the burden of political significance for the investigator. For these reasons the locally and internationally acknowledged Nepalese experts on Nepal were consulted only on very specific points, and chiefly through their written works. Though the differences of opinion among these experts is of interest here, I wished to learn of points of view which were not informed by dialogue with western scholarship, and which were not part of a broad political agenda which might include the foreign scholar as unwitting accomplice.

The Priest as Authority

There is a general tendency among students of religion to attempt to learn about their subject principally from priests or other religious specialists. Though I highly valued the information provided by priests in my research, theirs was but one among many of the points of view I sought. As mentioned previously, Father Locke chose to study the cult of Matsyendranath principally in Jana Baha in Kathmandu because of its priests' detailed knowledge of orthopraxy, in spite of the fact that the most important manifestation of Matsyendranath from an historical, demographic, economic, or almost any other point of view is Rato Matsyendranath of Patan. The work of Robert Levy in Bhaktapur has utilized a similar approach, relying predominantly on the perspective of the high-caste *Rājopādhyay* to portray

the spiritual lives of its residents. My attempt to understand beliefs as a system which pertains not only to ritual, but society as well, demanded that I consult the priest as one among many sources, rather than as an ultimate authority.

Boundaries of Inquiry

The complexities of Newar urban life have compelled many ethnographers to circumscribe their field of study to a fairly narrow scope. Typically, either geographic, occupational, or social boundaries are used to define the field of investigation. Toffin (1977, 1978, 1982), Barré et al (1981), Ishii (1972, 1978, 1980a, 1980b, 1987), Amatya (1970), Pradhan (1981), Quigley (1984), and Müller (1981) have explicitly chosen villages as their units of study. Nepali (1965) has generalized from particular settings to Newar society writ large without specifying the contexts upon which the generalizations were based.

Others have conducted research in the larger cities of the Kathmandu valley, but have confined their field to particular locales and/or social groups. Lewis's (1983) work among the *Tuladhar* of Assan tol is confined both geographically and socially to one of the most densely populated neighborhoods of the world. Gellner's work (1987a and 1987b) in Patan focusses primarily on one temple complex and the community which serves it, consisting primarily of *Śākyas* and *Vajrācāryas*. Toffin has also focused on one particular *jāt*, the *Rājopādhyay*, in the urban setting of Patan (Toffin 1987). Gutschow (1975a, 1975b, 1980, 1982, 1987), an architect by training, has focussed on the "place" as an object of inquiry in itself, also using it, to a lesser degree, as a means of understanding its inhabitants.

Certain occupations, often synonymous with caste status, have also served as the focus for research done in the larger cities and towns of the Kathmandu valley. Shepard's (1985) work among the *Silpakār* carpenters of Patan, and

Müller's work with the potters of Thimi are two examples of this orientation. Toffin (1979) has looked at one caste group in many different towns in the Kathmandu valley. Alsop (1973) has focussed on traditional bronze casting techniques in his work with the Śākya of U Baha in Patan.

All of these approaches use geographical and social status boundaries to circumscribe the "territory" which is the focus of their investigation. Others, such as Rosser (1966), have concentrated on particular historical events to illuminate wider social issues. Issues are the focus of many works which draw on often unspecified ethnographic resources, leaving in question the degree to which one can generalize about the particular observations and conclusions made with respect to a highly diverse population (cf. Greenwold (1978, 1974a,b, 1977), Fürer-Haimmendorf (1956), Stahl (1975), Vergati (1979, 1982)).

The Work of Father John Locke

The work of John Locke on the subject of Bungadya was vital to my decision to pursue this topic. Without his detailed review of historical sources in Sanskrit and other languages, it would have been impossible to examine effectively the topic of this dissertation. Because of the importance of his work in its own right and its importance to my own, it is imperative not only to express my debt of gratitude, but to explain how my work and his complement one another.

In 1973 Father Locke published what he has styled "...a short history and brief description..." of Bungadya's *rath jātrā* which was based "...almost exclusively [on] a survey of available secondary sources confirmed or corrected by informants." (Locke 1980:4) His second work on the subject was originally submitted to Tribhuvan University as his doctoral dissertation. Subsequently published in 1980 as a book entitled Karunamaya, it is far more extensive in scope,

but still relies fundamentally on his original description of the *rath jātrā* in his discussion of observances to Bungadya. As I have noted above, this description, though essentially correct, is quite brief and lacks the precision and detail necessary for anthropological analysis of the type proposed here. Though I note many discrepancies between his description and what I observed, without his account it is unlikely that I would have ever managed to make many of these observations in the first place.

Father Locke chose Janmadya of Kathmandu as the "...exemplar [of the cult], not because he is the principal of the four [*Lokeśwars*] ... but because at his shrine the fuller ritual is still performed and by priests who have a much greater understanding of the ritual and their Vajrayana traditions than their confreres in Patan-Bungamati" (1980:5). This strategy, though sensible for his purpose,³ would defeat mine, which was to understand the cult from popular perspectives. Thus, these works are complementary in terms of emphasis on subject material as well as intent, for my primary concern is with Bungadya as understood by the multitudes who honor him, whereas Locke's primary concern was with Janmadya as a focus of orthodox practice and specialized understanding.

"My God" versus "My Village": Bungadya and the Festival as a Perspective on Newar Society

In order to understand the importance of the *jātrā* to its numerous and varied participants and to utilize fully the potential of the *jātrā* and cult of Bungadya to shed new light on Newar culture, a situational focus was adopted for this study. Anthropologists are often chastised for their apparent possessiveness of field sites

³Though see note above regarding Cobahadya.

as revealed in statements which include the phrase "in my village..." The "territorial imperative" of the anthropologist is derived, in the best instance, from the methodological (and psychological) necessity of drawing some kind of boundary around the material which one considers relevant to the project at hand.⁴ These boundaries are nearly always geographical, possibly coupled with the specification of one ethnic group or social status as part of the definition of the population under study.

A prominent Nepali anthropologist once remarked that since I didn't have a village we would have to say that "I had a god." As he is a proponent of applied, development-oriented research and an opponent of "excessive" interest in Newar culture, I suspect that this was not intended as a friendly observation, but it is nonetheless close to the truth. The primary ethnographic subject of this study, the festival of Bungadya is a magnet which draws many people from many different places. Though my research sites (and residences) were essentially limited to the city of Patan and Bungamati village, informants came from all over the valley. This is one of the features of the *jātrā* which made it particularly interesting to me and which would be obscured if I had simply limited my study to Patan (or a section of Patan, since a city of 60,000 is not a feasible unit of place-oriented ethnographic inquiry) or Bungamati.

The *jātrā* provides a perspective on Newar culture which encompasses its diversity, one of this culture's more interesting characteristics. The *jātrā* provided a common theme for soliciting information through interviews with many different people. It also provided an arena for observing people from all sectors of Newar

⁴In the worst instance, it derives from a desire to retain privileged access to "ethnographic material" conceived of as one's own.

society engaged in different activities inspired by one image or event. Furthermore, it provided a constant theatre of interaction among different social groups, whether they were vying for public or divine attention, competing for valued space or other resources, or cooperating in a collective endeavour. In the latter instance, the *jātrā* also provided behavioral and testimonial (through interviews) evidence of associations which cross-cut other voluntary, residential, or kin-based groups. Finally, because people of many different religious persuasions come to honor Bungadya, it provided an opportunity to examine directly through observation as well as discussion the diversity and commonalities of beliefs which are current within Newar culture. For all of these reasons, I chose to "have" a god rather than a village and to focus on situations which involved this god, Bungadya.

Participation, Observation, Description, and Photography

My primary research methodology was participant observation. My participation included sharing feasts, joining processions, taking part in rituals, lending a hand in mundane matters with whatever resources I had available, and contributing to gossip, both as subject matter and participant. I interviewed individuals, often using photographs in order to follow-up on events I had witnessed and to pursue other issues.

I never administered standardized questionnaires as such, though I made it a point to make several basic inquiries in the course of each interview. I considered it antithetical to the whole point of my research, and potentially insulting to those with whom I wished to speak, to conduct instrument-driven interviews.

An important research goal was to have people relate their feelings and knowledge about Bungadya in a manner which was natural to them. Though I will

not begin to pretend that having a foreigner in one's home asking questions could be natural, I did not wish to compound the problem by introducing any more bizarre a form of discourse than necessary. Furthermore, a major point of my research was to establish the value and uniqueness of many different perspectives. To have attempted to solicit these perspectives in a blatantly standardized format would have undermined this objective not only by conveying an inappropriate attitude, but by accentuating the notion that there is a "correct" answer which I wished to hear.

Contrary to my expectations, the available descriptions of the *jātrā* were far from complete and, to some degree, erroneous. Clearly, my work would have been far more difficult without these descriptions (cf. Locke:1973,1980, Lobsiger-Dellenbach:1953), but it soon became apparent that I could not rely on them except as a basis for inquiry and comparison. I found that I was engaged in ground-breaking ethnography during my entire field study, for the more details I uncovered, the more gaps in my descriptive data became apparent.

I considered it essential to witness personally events of interest rather than relying on the accounts of informants. I also tried to observe recurrent events as many times as possible. By witnessing annual events several times over the two years and eight months of my field research, I was better able to distinguish their essential features from those features which were the result of circumstances peculiar to a particular year. Even if I felt that I had adequately documented and understood a ritual event, I would try to observe it as often as possible in hopes of witnessing a situation that demanded departure from the norm so that I could better understand what aspects of the ritual were fundamental to its meaning.

Another reason for relying heavily on direct observation was that prescribed (or preferred) behavior frequently differed significantly from actual behavior. Verbal accounts of events which were to transpire rarely matched accurately what in fact took place. Details, obvious to my informants, may have been considered unnecessary to relate; unforeseen circumstances may have demanded improvisation; a tradition once followed may have fallen into disuse; or a new innovation may have been incorporated as part of an ever-evolving tradition.

I required a method of obtaining explanations and interpretations of rituals and other events which were often esoteric and complex. It was usually inappropriate or impossible to obtain explanations of events while they transpired. Photography proved invaluable in resolving this and many other methodological problems. Its effectiveness was due, in part, to the role of the photograph in Nepalese social life. Nepalese hospitality, irrespective of the host's ethnicity or social status, nearly always includes showing photographs to guests. A host is likely to display painstakingly numerous albums containing even more numerous prints of friends and family to a new guest. Photographs are standard topics of conversation and sharing them is a familiar social activity.

By precisely cross-indexing photographs with my field notes, I could use them effectively to review complicated events in detail. More importantly, these photographs provided a means for soliciting interpretations of one event from many different informants. The photos enabled me to portray an event in each interview in exactly the same manner. It was unnecessary in many cases for me to provide my own verbal descriptions in order to solicit explanations from informants. Any description I might provide would be colored by my perceptions and interpretations, a situation that had to be avoided if at all possible. By simply

showing informants photographs of the events about which I wanted to know, I could prompt them to respond freely with whatever the photos brought to mind as well as answer specific questions.

An unexpected benefit of using photographs in this manner was their power to evoke spontaneous observations concerning other topics, the importance of which I could not have foreseen, but which were often of great interest. In one instance, a simple photograph of an object prompted a friend to recall his nightmares about gods and led him to reveal his suspicions that a prolonged illness may have been caused by his failure to fulfill an obligation to Bungadya.⁵ All I had hoped to learn from that particular photo was the name of the object portrayed. Some of my richest and most poignant material came from unexpected revelations inspired by photographs.

Photographs were also welcome gifts. They provided a vital link in the difficult task of conducting anthropological investigation among a highly transient population: the crowds which gathered around temples and chariots or assembled for feasts. Some activities which interested me lasted only seconds, very little time to establish the trust and rapport for any meaningful conversation.

Though Newars casually greet each other with what seem to the outsider to be impertinent questions (Where are you going?, Have you washed your face?, Have you eaten rice?) and overt curiosity is not regarded as inappropriate, for a foreigner to accost a total stranger with a plethora of detailed questions about their

⁵It is important to note that this obligation to Bungadya involved another deity, Bhairab, whose wrath, the informant felt, was responsible for his sickness. I know of no instance where an illness has been attributed directly to the displeasure of the compassionate Bungadya, except, perhaps, in several cases in which the demise of members of royal families were linked with disastrous *rath jātrās* (see chapter 9).

caste, place of residence, ritual customs, etc. could understandably provoke annoyance. Photographs provided a reasonable excuse for a future rendezvous and a small means of reciprocating people's generosity of time and patience. I was often able to interview individuals whom I had first met briefly in the midst of great confusion later on at greater length in their homes. This permitted me to ask more questions in a relaxed atmosphere and allowed me learn about the individual's household by actually seeing it. In most cases, no compensation was requested by those whom I so abruptly accosted, for they usually shared my curiosity in their own culture and were proud to share their knowledge of it. They were also frequently curious about my culture and especially about me, a foreigner who knew their language and was inordinately inquisitive about their beliefs and customs.

Newar Perspectives on the Role of the Anthropologist.

Though this section could best be written by a committee of Newars, some who enjoyed my presence and others who were annoyed by it, the mandates of dissertation writing compel me to speak for them. It is critical in evaluating any ethnography to have some sense of the role of the anthropologist within the society he or she studied from both the anthropologist's and informants' perspectives. What motives prompted cooperation or reluctance to cooperate? What access to information was the anthropologist permitted or denied, and why? What risks, efforts, or expenses were incurred by an individuals' association with the anthropologist? What benefits did such association entail?

All of these factors can have a profound impact on an anthropologist's understanding of a society. The less these factors are acknowledged and discussed by the ethnographer, the more difficult it is to assess the ethnography.

Photographer

The most obvious reason for my presence at festivities and rituals was the fact that I took pictures. Eventually, it became widely known that I not only took pictures, but gave them away. This was both beneficial and detrimental to my work. Knowledge of my interest in rituals and feasts and a genuine interest in having me as a guest, whether out of generosity or because of my inherent value as a curiosity, certainly motivated many to invite me to both public and private events. An added advantage of my presence was that I functioned as an unpaid photographer. In the village of Bungamati I had to turn down many invitations from strangers to witness domestic rituals simply because I did not have the time to attend. Rather than having to justify my presence at feasts and rituals, I was more often compelled to provide an excuse for my absence. The job of "village photographer" was as demanding as it was rewarding.

Another problem which developed as a result of my giving away photographs was that individuals who were completely unknown to me would approach me in the street and ask for their photograph. Because I spoke with hundreds of individuals over the course of a year, it was difficult to know whether

their request was justified or not.⁶ Though this was occasionally a source of embarrassment, and more often annoyance, the benefits of my photographic generosity in providing entree and a token means of reciprocation far outweighed its disadvantages.

Foreigner/Anthropologist

My identity as an anthropologist was more difficult to establish. Those who were most closely concerned with the "god's work" knew that my purpose included *anusandhan*, or investigation, into their culture (*samskr̥ti*) as well as carefully documenting the worship of Bungadya. Both Patan and Bungamati had been hosts to foreign anthropologists and architects previously.⁷ Unfortunately, the last foreign anthropologist to work extensively in Bungamati left under duress, due to rumors that he was selling antiquities. Surprisingly, this had little impact, in so far as I could detect, on people's perceptions of me. It did, however, cause me to proceed with great caution in establishing myself as a part-time resident of Bungamati. In Patan I knew of no negative associations with anthropologists who

⁶Once a particularly persistent young lady, employed in the *Guthī Samsthan* office as a clerk, insisted I take her portrait. After I finally agreed, she persisted in asking "*Photo gwo?*" (where is the photo?) whenever she saw me. I explained that printing would take some time, but to no avail. Finally, at a large feast, she again confronted me, and I responded by complaining that all she ever said was "*Photo gwo? Photo gwo?*", never "Hello" and that "*Photo gwo*" must therefore be her *mantra*. The other members of the office staff found this hysterical, and the head of the office often repeated the joke, moving his fingers as if fingering a rosary while chanting "*Photo gwo, photo gwo*". I could thereafter count on him and several others to explain that it was impossible for me to provide everyone with photographs, stating that I needed photos in order to learn about the "god's work" (*dyā:yagu jyā*). Those who persistently asked for photos were thenceforth dubbed "*photogwopim*."

⁷Stephen Greenwold started his field work in Bungamati in the late 1960's, but then moved to Kathmandu. A Danish architectural team stayed for a short period in the early 1970's (cf. *Bungmati en Lansby i Nepal*. 1974).

had worked there previously,⁸ but found those who were acquainted with them to have quite positive feelings toward them. During my stay three other anthropologists came to work in Patan, though we seldom saw one another unless we sought each other out.⁹

Tourism, Nepal's major industry, brings buses of tourists regularly to Patan in addition to the many others who come by bicycle or taxi from Kathmandu where the vast majority of tourists in Nepal stay. U.S.A.I.D. and the Peace Corps have extensive programs in Nepal, as does the German government. Curious foreigners are thus well-known, as are development workers, though the latter, in Patan at least, are primarily concerned with the preservation of architectural treasures.

Foreigners are suspect for many different reasons in different quarters. Research, even during my stay, was regarded as potentially threatening by those who had the prerogative to approve or deny research visas. The political system of Nepal is under pressure and the King's government is very wary of being portrayed in anything but a flattering light. Researchers interested in deities are also suspect, for images may be stolen. Though my research clearly related to deities, I made it a point never to buy any but the least expensive images made of *papier maché*. I thus distinguished my interest in deities from an interest in

⁸To my knowledge only four foreign scholars had done research based in Patan prior to my arrival; Tristram Riley Smith, and Ian Alsop worked with *Śākya* metal image casters, Peter Burleigh, who was concerned chiefly with inscriptions, Michael Allen, who is best known for his work on the *Bare* and the cult of the Kumari, and the art historian Clifford Jones.

⁹I am particularly grateful for the exchanges I had with David Gellner during this period. We shared our knowledge and ignorance as well as other resources in the best spirit of scholarly cooperation; a spirit which is all too rare among typically territorial social scientists.

images.¹⁰ Inquiries about land and income are suspect, for taxation and land rights, particularly in the face of relatively recent land reform, are sources of major disputes.

My central topic, Bungadya and his festival, though interesting from a political perspective, is politically benign as a topic of research. Furthermore, it is a subject about which nearly everyone has a point of view to express and stories to tell whether or not they participate in the worship of Bungadya or his festival. The cult of Bungadya is a natural, intriguing, and generally non-threatening topic of conversation for most Newars. My interest, though shared by many others, was simply viewed as more obsessive than that of most.¹¹

The Politics of Speaking Newari

The larger object of my research was Newar society, and my questions about Bungadya led naturally to more general questions concerning Newar culture. This topic is not politically benign. My interest in Newar culture and my knowledge of Newari was in itself often perceived by Newar and non-Newar alike as a political statement expressing solidarity with Newar interests. As discussed above, the evolution of Newar ethnic and political identity is currently at a critical phase, thus the mere acknowledgement of Newar culture as a distinctive subject of inquiry

¹⁰I deliberately waited until the end of my stay, when I felt that my motives were clearly understood, to take extensive photographs of relevant images and ritual paraphernalia. I was rewarded for my patience with remarkable and, at times, overzealous cooperation. While photographing the decorative *lhusā* from the *raths* I had to restrain volunteer helpers from using pebbles to remove layers of *sindur*, ghee, and soot from inscriptions chased in gold gilt brass.

¹¹I became known as a *Bungadya:yagu bhakta* (devotee of Bungadya:, especially one prone to express such devotion in a ritual manner) and it was joked that I was *dyā:hwem*, or "obsessed with" or "crazy" about the god.

bears political significance for many.¹² Most of my research was conducted in Newari, though I would also resort to Nepali, especially in the early phases of my research. Though most of the Newars I met spoke Nepali, it was rarely the language they would use at home or among other Newars. Any hope of understanding observed social interactions or naturally participating in conversations lay in my knowledge of Newari. Because observation was a central part of my methodology, and because I hoped to solicit interpretations, stories, and recollections in interviews as spontaneously as possible, it was vital that I speak and understand their language of preference.

Though it is not uncommon for foreigners to speak Nepali, relatively few speak Newari. This distinguished me from other foreigners, just as speaking Newari distinguishes the Newar from other Nepalese. The importance of the Newari language in the evolution of Newar ethnic identity will be further discussed below. It is a vital part of their collective identity, which embraces tremendous diversity, and this collective identity and their language are perceived by many to be besieged by forces of modernization and government policies. By speaking

¹²Lest I give the impression that non-Newars (or even Newars) are unified in their denial (or promotion) of a distinctive Newar identity, I should mention that non-Newars who heard me speaking Newari would often congratulate me and express their regret that they had never learned the language.

Newari I acknowledged the importance of their culture and demonstrated my willingness to work hard to understand it.¹³

Preserver of Tradition, Betrayer of Secrets

My work was often perceived to be beneficial for the preservation of Newar culture. This was the most common explanation that one Newar would offer another in explaining my motives for doing research. I was frequently urged to publish my work in Nepali or Newari to this end.¹⁴ This very conscious attitude concerning their cultural identity and the notion of cultural identity per se, coupled with their desire to preserve their traditions, made many of my inquiries especially relevant to their own concerns.

A tension existed, however, between a willingness to share information for the sake of preserving their culture, and the secrecy in which many of their traditions are shrouded. Privileged access to rituals, feasts, gods, and certain kinds of knowledge is a feature within every stratum of Newar society for both men and women.¹⁵ Initiations (*dekhā*) confer these privileges in many cases, in other instances it is *jāt* or *guṇī* membership. In some cases, it is the hereditary

¹³Newars who learned that I spoke Newari almost invariably asked "Is Newari hard or is Nepali hard?" (*Newā: bhāy thāku ki khey bhāy thāku?*), knowing full well that the answer would be Newari, and taking what seemed to be a perverse pride in the difficulty of their language. It was rare that I walked down a crowded street in Patan, even after living there over two years, without hearing someone say "*Wa newā: bhāy sa, wa*". (He knows Newari!) Though initially gratifying, it persisted to the point of becoming tedious. Gellner noted the same phenomenon and had the same reaction.

¹⁴Though Newars promote their own language as an essential part of their tradition, relatively few Newars read written Newari with the same facility that they read Nepali.

¹⁵I was recently surprised and gratified to read nearly these same words offered by Declan Quigley; "Secrecy seems to be one of the paramount virtues of Newar society and is found at every level of social organization." (1987:163)

assumption of a ritual obligation, independent of *guthī* membership,¹⁶ which entails privileged access or involvement. Toffin (1984:18) has described one example of secret knowledge being shared by an entire village and noted the severe consequences for the individual who betrayed it to him.¹⁷

Though the priestly castes generally have more extensive privileged access to rituals, feasts, and secret knowledge, their access does not encompass all privileged access. Many *guthī* rituals exclude priests (e.g. the rituals of the *gākhus*)¹⁸ and some rituals and feasts of the *Bārāhī*) and several rituals, particularly sacrifices, exclude the priests at some point during, or throughout, the ritual.¹⁹ This fact illustrates more clearly than any other that there is no one ultimate authority with respect to the annual cycle of rituals associated with Bungadya; expertise and privileged knowledge are widely distributed among different specialists.

I encountered no even from which I was excluded because I was not a Newar. Newars express their own frustration at being denied access to parts of their culture. Their questions concerning privileged information are met, as were

¹⁶The *Niyekhus* who paint the image of Bungadya have extensive secret ritual obligations which are purely hereditary (i.e. they are not defined as *guthī* responsibilities, which may also be hereditary), as do others obligated to Bungadya as well as other gods.

¹⁷The secret pertained to the origins of Pyangaon, which legend maintains was established by the descendants of the children of a Newar man and Tamang woman. Because this legend explains the inferior status of the residents of Pyangaon, it is regarded as sensitive information, and the individual suspected of revealing it to Toffin was expelled from his clan.

¹⁸See appendix A, *Gākhu Bhairab Pujā*, and *Gākhu* feast with *Harkham dyā*.

¹⁹This point is discussed at length in Chapters 6 and 10. For two examples of *pujās* involving *pānjus* which exclude them from certain secret portions, see Appendix A, *Śanti-āgam Kīla pujā* and *Dila dyā: pujā*, secret sacrifice.

mine, with the inevitable "*Dhāye mathya*." "It is forbidden to say." In most instances, even if I had been born a *vajrācārya*, I would not have been allowed to attend secret rites unless I had taken the appropriate initiation, been a member of the appropriate *guthī*, or have inherited the privileged position and the obligations it entailed. Though my impure caste status restricted me from entering the sancta of some temples,²⁰ the only rites I could not observe from outside the temple door were also secret to all but a few Newars, usually the priests.

Several rituals are traditionally performed at times meant to discourage on-lookers, such as the largest sacrifice (*mahā bali*), which is ideally performed in the middle of the night.²¹ The fact that crowds sometimes witness these rites due to the laxity of the officiants was bemoaned by some as symptomatic of a decline in their tradition. Restrictions on witnessing rituals are often explained as being for the sake of the welfare of the unwitting onlooker. Having one's face turn black, vomiting blood, and dying are typically cited as possible outcomes from witnessing secret events.

²⁰I was on several occasions invited into Bungadya's temple by the *pānju* attendant. Because I feared offending others, I declined these invitations all but once, when the *pānju* was insistent and there were no witnesses I did not know personally. The issue of access of impure castes to Buddhist rituals is complex, for the fundamentally egalitarian ethic of Buddhism is occasionally invoked to permit impure castes to participate in traditionally segregated rituals (see Allen:1987b, concerning the consecration of a *cībā*: sponsored by a *Nay*, (member of the unclean butcher's caste).

²¹See appendix A, *Mahā bali*.

Another possible outcome of my witnessing any event was that through my publication of a book²² or my photographs, many others would learn of it. Photographing sacrifices was occasionally a sensitive issue because of the negative impression it was assumed such photographs would create abroad. I never assumed that I could take photographs, and asked permission in cases where there seemed to be any doubt. As mentioned above, it soon became expected of me that I would photograph nearly everything, and I was even encouraged to do so. However, strangers complained on a few occasions about my photographing sacrifices. In each case, someone interceded and offered an explanation which evidently satisfied the concerned individual.

Colleagues who have done research among the Newar have expressed astonishment upon seeing my photographs of sacrifices, stating that they were surprised I was permitted to take them. They have also been surprised at the number of sacrifices I witnessed. Their incredulity prompts me to consider why I was allowed to witness and photograph sacrifices freely.

I was careful to broach general questions about sacrifice only after I felt it was clear that I was not inclined to judge it negatively. My early inquiries about the purpose of sacrifice pertained to particular contexts, presupposing its general necessity. One benefit, if not purpose, of sacrifice is the feast which almost

²²It was often assumed that I would publish a book based on my research and make a lot of money. Trying to dissuade one from this notion left the larger problem of explaining why I was doing what I was doing if I was not going to make any money from it.

inevitably follows. It was well known that I enjoyed feasts²³ (during which a sacrificial animal is generally consumed), and thus gave implied approval of the sacrifices which usually preceded them. I also assume that the frequency with which sacrifices were performed in the context of the *jātrā*, and the ubiquity of my presence while they occurred, inured their participants to my presence just as I became inured to the spectacle of sacrifice itself.

Though I was never excluded from an event because I was not a Newar, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for foreigners to see some gods which are ostensibly public. Armed guards from the Nepalese army enforce a prohibition against non-Hindus entering the temple compound of Pashupatinath, the most revered of all Hindu shrines in Nepal.²⁴ Restrictions strictly prohibit foreigners from viewing the principal deities at Changu Narayan, Vajrayogini in Sankhu, Guhyesvari, and other temples. Some deities, though worshipped by many, can actually be seen only by their attendants, and others are said to be only partially revealed, as at Changu Narayan. The theme of exclusion from access to deities is thus prevalent in Nepal, though the reason for denying access varies from site to site.

Photographs of these deities are, of course, strictly prohibited. Temple attendants also frequently discourage photography of gods which are open to public view. This restriction has less to do with the revelation of secrets than with

²³This was definitely an acquired taste, attained only after a long period of becoming seriously ill after nearly every feast I attended. The food itself does not immediately appeal to most untrained western palates, and it is offered in prodigious quantities; two generous helpings are the absolute minimum, often served at each of two sittings only an hour apart.

²⁴It is said that a foreigner, bearing an impressive document stating that the bearer is a follower of the Hindu faith and signed by a Brahmin in Varanasi, obtained entrance to the temple compound.

the actual threat of theft of the god itself. On several occasions when I asked why I could not take photos, I was led to an empty niche or plinth where a god had formerly stood and told that it had just been stolen. The rampant destruction of the artistic and religious treasures of Nepal is fueled by a relatively new, but insatiable, market for Nepalese art coupled with lackadaisical enforcement of export laws. Many temple attendants believe that thieves take photographs of objects to be stolen in order to show them to prospective customers. Many believe, therefore, that photographing images and the "material culture" surrounding them is more likely to contribute to their destruction than preservation.²⁵

The Politics of Residence and Social Affiliation

Another issue of access pertained to people within different segments of society. Though the social implications of caste identity among the Newar are not felt as strongly as in the plains of India, or even among their Bahun/Chettri/Dom neighbors, theirs is a highly stratified society which is residentially segmented to a significant degree with respect to caste. I was very concerned that I not be too closely linked with one segment of society for fear of alienating another.

Though being adopted as part of a household would have undoubtedly been revealing with respect to that household and its social network, I felt that actually residing within a household would prejudice others' attitudes toward me. Even residing within a single family dwelling in a separate apartment proved awkward when I wished to entertain or interview low-caste people in my home. In

²⁵I had the unfortunate opportunity to illustrate the role photography can play in the preservation of tradition. A member of a Tamrakar (brass-working caste) *bhajan* which displayed finely wrought ghee lamps while it played music during the *rath jātrā* asked for a photo of his lamp after it had been stolen from his home. He intended to use the photograph in order to duplicate the original.

one instance, a good friend who belonged to the butcher caste declined my impromptu invitation by feigning a sudden stomach ache. It was only later that I realized that the cause of his "illness" was the prospect of entering a building which was home not only to me, but to a high caste "Malla" family.

I eventually moved to another apartment located in a building, owned by an absentee landlord, which housed a school in the lower two floors and a Tibetan family on the third. These two features were significant; children of many different *jāts* came to the building each day, and the Tibetans were not concerned about who came to visit. The results of the move from my former residence confirmed my apprehensions about living in a household. Visitors came more freely and even spoke more freely than before; I soon learned of the terrible reputation of my prior landlord as an irascible miser.²⁶

In Bungamati I retained a room in a home accustomed to many visitors; it too had a school on the lower floor and was the home of a former elected village Panchayat representative (*Pradhan Panca*) whose opinion was often sought on many different matters. As a *Tuladhar*, he did not belong to the privileged *bare* castes of the village from whom the *pānjus* were drawn. Because of my close association with the *pānjus*, and the fact that the majority of my social contacts within Bungamati were with the *pānjus* and their extended families, I would occasionally hear complaints that I was only concerned with high-caste people. Though these few complaints were only articulated by individuals emboldened by

²⁶This had become obvious to me and was a prime reason for leaving my original lodgings. I was gratified to find that the community silently applauded my move from his house to one across the street. Berreman (1972:xxxvi-lvii) provides an account of shifting from a Brahmin to Muslim research assistant which had a similar effect.

rice liquor, they confirmed the validity of my concerns about the impressions my social interactions could create among those whom I did not yet know.

The structure of the *jātrā* made it relatively easy to establish that I was not exclusively allied with any particular group in Patan. The early stages of my research were devoted largely to the construction of the *rath* which involved farmers, carpenters, and painters; each group being drawn from a different *jāt*. As this work was done openly next to a busy thoroughfare, it was obvious that my interests and associations extended to many sectors of society, and, of course, that I was interested in the *rath jātrā*.

My social contacts and, especially, the hospitality I enjoyed at feasts in private homes was under close scrutiny by the community at large. The fact that I was willing to eat with almost anyone, anywhere, seemed to be a matter of interest, for I often overheard explanations of my presence at feasts which included this fact. In some cases, particularly among farmers and lower castes, this met with approval. In one instance, a high caste host given to conspicuous display of wealth, made a point of reacting to my compliments by contrasting his feasts to those offered by *jyāpus*, a reference to a feast I had eaten the day before about which I had not informed him.

I was careful to avoid close association with the government office overseeing the *jātrā* until after I had established rapport with those whose work the office was managing. The cooperation of the *Guthī Samsthan* office was vital to my work, as was that of the *pānjus*. Their authority over others involved in the "god's work" made it imperative to win the approval of the *guthī samsthan* officials without jeopardizing the confidence of those whose work they supervised. On more than one occasion I was given what I considered quite innocuous, though

helpful, information with the proviso that I not reveal my knowledge to others in the *guthī* office: an indication of the politically sensitive nature of interaction with (and within) the office, which, superficially, appeared quite relaxed.

The *guthī samsthān* office located in Ta Baha next to Patan's temple for Bungadya is a branch of the central office which answers directly to the palace; no Ministry intervenes between the palace and *guthī samsthān*. This direct link with the palace lends authority to *guthī* staff while, at the same time, placing their activities under special scrutiny, making accommodation to an unusual situation, i.e., an inquisitive anthropologist, a potentially risky proposition. Both Newars and non-Newars on the staff of this office explained their cooperation in terms of the thoroughness of my research, and their hopes that I would write a complete work on the *jātrā*. Though I was extended many courtesies and received generous assistance from this office, officials remained reluctant to discuss substantive matters concerning the disposition of funds and channels of authority throughout my stay. These details I had to glean from other sources.

I have portrayed in this section what should, ideally, have been attested to by others: Newar impressions of me and their effects on interactions I had with Newars. In examining the constraints and incentives which were operative in determining one's decision to interact with me in a given manner, I have illustrated how these factors affected my research strategies. Only by attempting to understand why someone would choose to interact, or refuse to interact, in a particular way, can one begin to understand the relevance of information obtained through social interaction, observation, questionnaires, or any other ethnographic methodology. The "participant" portion of the "participant-observation" methodology, which I used more than any other, demands that one engage others

in a manner which is appropriate and meaningful to them. It is for this reason that I have gone to some length to explain my methodology in terms of the social meaning of interaction with the anthropologist, albeit only as understood by the anthropologist himself.

CHAPTER III

NEWAR CULTURE and SOCIETY: AN OVERVIEW

In the last chapter I provided my assessment of the Newar view of the anthropologist and noted how this assessment informed my methodology. In the same spirit which inspired that approach, I shall now outline fundamental features of Newar society as observed from several different perspectives. First, I will examine Newar culture as part of a broad cultural pattern characteristic of the subcontinent, noting in particular essential points of distinction and similarity between Nepal and India. Then I shall consider Newar descriptions of themselves, *Parbatiyā* observations on their Newar neighbors, and, finally, the more distant perspectives of anthropologists. The political domination of the Kathmandu Valley by the *Parbatiyā Bāhun-Chetris* has been instrumental in the evolution of Newar ethnicity. These descriptions of Newar society are, therefore, drawn in the light of comparisons with the *Parbatiyā*. This brief outline will define the uniqueness of Newar culture while acknowledging the variety of forms it takes, thereby establishing a context for understanding Newar devotion to the multivalent Bungadya.

Nepal and Indic Culture: "l'Inde qui se fait"

In order to both situate this research in its broader ethnographic context and to demonstrate its potential relevance to theory concerning other parts of South Asia, it is necessary to consider the relationship between Nepalese and Indian culture. Sylvain Levi, one of the foremost scholars of Nepal as well as one of the earliest, described Nepal as "l'Inde qui se fait"; that which India would have been if history had spared her Islamic invasion and British colonization (1905: vol.

1, 28). This assertion, though impossible to negate or verify, lies at the base of much scholarly interest in Nepal and especially the Kathmandu valley.

Legend and history concur that Nepal has been a refuge for those escaping from the more tumultuous south (Basham 1967:268, Wolpert 1977:105). The first rulers to leave any record of their heritage, the Licchavis, are thought to have come from India, and some of their inscriptions have been interpreted as making this claim (Slusser 1982:21-22). The ruling Shah dynasty claims Rajput descent. Several Newar sub-castes also claim Indian origins as a source of prestige and enhanced status.¹ Yet, these same groups who proudly proclaim Indian heritage are also quick to deny that they are Indian, and resent Indian intrusions in Nepalese affairs.² Though politically and culturally distinct, India³ and Nepal share a cultural heritage which bears consideration from a historical point of view.

Three fundamental characteristics of the valley civilization make it amenable to comparison with an India of the past: it is a caste society ruled by a Hindu monarchy, and within this monarchy Hinduism and Buddhism both survive as popular religions with broad-based support. The survival of Mahayana Buddhism in Nepal, all but extinguished in India by Muslim invasion, has resulted in a unique

¹For example, the *Saimi* (or Manandhars) claim to be the descendants of a clean caste from India which lost its status upon coming to Nepal and taking up oil pressing as an occupation (Greenwold 1977:195). Their return to clean caste status was subsequently granted by royal decree.

²Nepalese who travel to India typically report the treachery and untrustworthiness of Indians, and many express anxiety at the prospect of going there. Antagonism toward Indian fruit sellers surfaced on several occasions in Kathmandu during festivals in which they were harassed by high-spirited crowds.

³I acknowledge the difficulty in describing an "Indian culture." Contrary to Ramanujin et. al. I agree with E.M. Forster's Aziz, who in *Passage to India* states that "There is no such person in existence as the general Indian." (1924:260) I therefore restrict this discussion to the broadest terms.

blend of Hinduism and Buddhism made possible by over a millennium of coexistence. Though nearly every king in Nepal who has left an indication of his religious orientation to posterity was first and foremost a Hindu,⁴ most of them offered substantial patronage to both Buddhist and Hindu shrines⁵, thereby supporting the survival of both traditions.

The Hindu Kingdom

The fact that Nepal has remained a Hindu Kingdom is of great interest for those who seek insight into South Asian polity. The consolidation of the Mughal empire in the sixteenth century effectively ended Hindu hegemony in what was to become India. *Manu Smṛti* (the Laws of Manu) and Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* provide early evidence of the divine order depicted in Vedic literature dictating social form in India. These works include stipulations concerning the obligations of a king to his subjects and vice versa. This and other historical evidence suggest a long tradition of Indian rulers interpreting their mandate to rule as entailing religious obligations to their subjects, or as constituting a religious obligation itself. However, it is difficult to assess how these codes were implemented or how the religious basis of royal authority and obligation might have been reflected in the daily lives of subjects. Archaeological evidence indicates that the special relationship which apparently was believed to exist between gods and kings in pre-Mogul India was often expressed through the architectural emulation of a divine

⁴One possible early exception to this is Vrsadeva, c. A.D. 400 (Slusser 1982:39). Three other kings in the twelfth century were more certainly Buddhist. Simhadeva (c.1099-1122), Manadeva (c.1137-40), and Rudradeva II (c. 1167-74) all professed their Buddhist faith, with the latter two abdicating their thrones to join monastic communities (1982:281).

⁵To designate a shrine as either "Hindu" or "Buddhist" is often problematic from several points of view which shall be discussed at length below.

order (cf. Fritz, Michell et al 1986). These ruins also suggest various hypotheses about public displays of power and the legitimization of authority. Toffin (1984:2) has suggested that Newar towns exemplify the classical principles of Hindu urban planning more faithfully than most Indian towns, which have been subjected to foreign influences for a longer period.⁶ Though one may not wish to draw inferences concerning the history of India based on that of Nepal,⁷ the Nepalese Hindu monarchy does provide a living example of the sort of reciprocal obligations between kings, subjects, and gods which may have existed in India prior to Mughal rule and which have been evolving in Nepal through millennia of continuous tradition.

Hindu-Buddhist Co-existence

This continuing tradition enfolds both Buddhism and Hinduism, permitting one to examine the impact of their mutual influence over a far longer time than history allowed in India. It also permits one to examine the evolution of Indic Mahayana Buddhism itself. A. L. Basham's description of Buddhism in medieval India is quite similar to many descriptions of the current state of Buddhism in Nepal.

If for a time Buddhism became to all intents and purposes a separate religion, denying the Vedas, the ordinary layman might not see it in that light. For him Buddhism was one of many cults and faiths, by no means mutually exclusive, all of which led to salvation, and all of which were respectable and worthy of honor. (1967:267-8)

Father John Locke has said of contemporary Newar Buddhism that:

⁶For a full treatment of evidence of classical Indian architectural principles in Newar settlements, see Gutshcow 1982, 1975b.

⁷Greenwold (1974a:101-2) and others have suggested that such inferences may be made.

...it appears here not as a religion separate from or opposed to the stream of culture of the sub-continent, but rather as an integral part of the religious culture that grew and flourished in the soil of the sub-continent. Tolerance, co-existence and assimilation have been the rule, and whatever friction history records between the two is similar to the friction between sectarian groups native to the sub-continent rather than to the radical opposition that existed later between Hinduism and Islam. (1980:3)

The fact that the closest popular indigenous glosses of our terms "Hindu" and "Buddhist" are *Śivamargi* and *Bauddhamargi* (literally, "on the road of," or follower of Shiva and Buddha, respectively) suggests that the popular Newar perception of the status of Buddhism is consistent with Locke's: that it is encompassed, with Hinduism, by a larger set of shared beliefs.

Those who would quibble with Levi's assertion about Nepal and India tend to regard the form of Buddhism found in Nepal today (and in most historical accounts from the last fifteen centuries) with disdain. Most Newar Buddhists consume alcohol, eat meat, perform sacrifices, marry, worship so-called "Hindu gods", and embrace caste status as an integral part of their social identity. Some who call themselves *Bauddhamargi* call upon the ritual services of a Brahmin. The "confused" state of religious practices perceived in Nepal is seen as the result of a process of decay and deviation from a great tradition presumed to have formerly existed in Nepal and India. Mary Slusser, the only other individual to attempt a study of the Kathmandu valley on the scale of Levi's, goes so far as to suggest that the Newar Buddhists have "no idea of the mockery they make of Buddhism" (1982:296).

Hindu practices in Nepal do not as frequently meet with the same sort of criticism. This is curious, for if they were subjected to the same standards of comparison, that is, with ancient textual injunctions designed to promote the ideal

Hindu society and orthopraxy, many of these practices would also appear corrupt.⁸ Two factors may be cited to account for this disparity of criticism. Nepalese Hindus have counterparts to the south in a well-studied living culture; thus, from the viewpoint of the anthropologist, deviations from Hindu orthodoxy are familiar and categorized as variations on a Hindu ideal (cf. Freed and Freed 1980:331-3). Newar Vajrayana Buddhists have no living counterparts who would compel the anthropologist to re-examine dominant notions about Indic Buddhism. Secondly, the exemplary Brahmin, both the pinnacle and foundation of Hindu caste society, exists in Nepal, whereas the Buddhist monk (purportedly the foundation of Buddhist society), for all intents and purposes, does not.⁹ Statements such as Slusser's about Newar Buddhists betray more presumption than knowledge; they are born of fantasies about the past and a misunderstanding of the present.

Buddhism and Monasticism in Nepal

There is no clear evidence that Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley was ever the exclusive provenance of, or dominated by, celibate monastic communities, though modern day Buddhist priests share Slusser's conviction that it once was. The *vajrācārya* priests who attend to the four *Lokeśwars* are quite conscious of the difference between their practices and those of their purportedly monastic ancestors. Rather than bemoan the passing of the former greatness of monasteries or monks, however, they are more likely to recall legendary tantric

⁸One of many possible examples is the common practice among Hindu Newars of offering sacrifices to Ganesh, the elephant-headed son of Shiva.

⁹This refers, of course, to Mahayanic monks in Newar society. There are Newar reformist Theravadin monks as well as Tibetan monastic communities.

masters who were capable of remarkable feats that no one can now perform.¹⁰ These priests express respect for the ascetic aspect of the Theravedic path, and even emulate it at times when ritual purity is required for the efficacy of *pujās*. They also, however, both in conversation and in ritual practice, assert that their Vajrayana tantric path transcends the monastic path which they believe was followed by their ancestors.¹¹

The point that Slusser and other critics of the Buddhism of contemporary Newars have missed is that there was always a population of lay-supporters of Buddhism, or householders, outside the monastery. Allen has suggested that a decrease in royal support for Buddhism in the twelfth century, coupled with its decline in India, forced Buddhist monks to seek more support from this lay population. They gained this support, in part, by taking over the ritual tasks formerly performed by Brahmins. (Allen 1973; Locke 1980:450) Rather than lamenting the downfall of monastic Buddhism in Nepal, a proponent of Buddhism could with equal justification celebrate the expansion of its influence into the former domain of the Brahmin and marvel at its survival without celebrate monastic communities.¹²

The Newar do have what are popularly referred to in Western accounts as monasteries. These structures, called *bāhā:s* in Newari, may have at one time housed monks, but now usually serve as residential compounds for householders.

¹⁰See Appendix A, *Khicā bhū*.

¹¹See Allen (1973:10) and Locke (1980:46) on this point concerning *bare chuyegu*. Ironically, this very initiation, in which the notion of transcending Hinayana is explicitly expressed, is the ritual in which Slusser sees unconscious mockery.

¹²Something which Conze (1951:53) has suggested is impossible.

Bāhā:s are most often quadrangular compounds built around enclosed courtyards. A shrine which is accessible to the public opens onto the courtyard. This shrine is usually situated opposite the entrance to the courtyard from the outside, though it occasionally occupies a free-standing temple at the courtyard's center. This shrine houses the main deity of the *bāhā*: called the *kwāpā dyā*:.¹³

In addition to the shrine for the publicly worshipped god, there is a private shrine (*āgam*) to which only initiates of the Buddhist community associated with the *bāhā* have access. This Buddhist community, the *saṃgha*, is responsible for the worship of the *āgam dyā*: and the *kwāpā dyā*: and the maintenance of their shrines. Though these compounds were at one time solely occupied by *saṃgha* members, many have been divided for sale to others, and many *saṃgha* members live elsewhere. The *bāhā*: remains, however, the center of religious activity for *saṃgha* members.

Membership in these communities is heritable; only the *bare* are entitled to *saṃgha* membership, and one may not shift from the *saṃgha* into which one was born unless this shift is by virtue of the establishment of a branch *bāhā*: and *saṃgha*. There are fifteen main (*mul*) *bāhā*:s in Patan. Of these fifteen, twelve have a total of 106 branches (*sakha bāhā*:) among them (Locke n.d.). Though each of these branches has its own *saṃgha*, these branch *saṃghas* retain their ties to the *mul bāhā*:s, and *sakha bāhā*: *saṃgha* members must initiate their sons in their *mul bāhā*:.

¹³Locke n.d. designates the *kwāpā dyā*: as the guardian god of the *bāhā*:. In some cases, a free standing temple as well as a separate *kwāpā dyā*: shrine may both be present in the same *bāhā*:. In this case (such as in Kwa baha in Patan) the god in the central shrine is different than the *kwāpā dyā*:.

The Newar distinguish between the *bāhā* and a very similar structure, the *bahī*, in several ways, some of which clearly allude to the former status of the *bahī* as a monastic *vihāra*. With few exceptions, the *bahī samghas* are exclusively comprised of Śakyas: Bare who are not qualified to perform the fire sacrifice (*hwama pujā*) which is vital to the Vajrayana tradition of the householder priest. The *bahīs* are also structurally distinct from the *bāhās*, being more suitable for communal living than for housing individual families.¹⁴ Wright's chronicle notes that Siddhinarsimha, a King of Patan in the seventeenth century, counted twenty-five celebrate monasteries in Patan (Wright 1966) which Locke clearly identifies as *bahīs*.¹⁵ Many of these *bahīs* have very small *samghas* none of which are celebrate. It is not unusual for these structures to be used as schools, for which they are structurally well-suited.

The importance of the *bāhā* and *bahī*-centered community in Newar Buddhist society has led Lewis to dub their religion "*bāhā* Buddhism." The so-called Newar "monastery" is in fact the religious center of a *samgha* comprised of married householders whose membership is heritable and based on caste and initiation. Though these features of the Newar Buddhist community are anomalous from many points of view, they are logical developments within communities practicing tantric Vajrayana Buddhism in a caste society. Vajrayana Buddhism

¹⁴*Bahīs* generally have long open galleries as opposed to the discrete residential units found in most *bāhās*.

¹⁵There are two reasons for concluding that this reference to *nirbanik vihārs* pertains to *bahīs* rather than *bāhās*. One is that it includes mention of the organization of the twenty five *vihārs* of Patan into one *samgha* of ten and another of fifteen, a grouping which persists today. The second is that the chronical notes that people referred to these *vihāras* as *bahī* "...because the *banaprastha bhiksus* did not live in cities but in forests", hence the term *bahī* (outside, Np.) (Locke n.d.).

emphasizes formulaic ritual as a means of achieving release within one's lifetime, and embraces sexual intercourse as a technique for enlightenment.¹⁶ Ritual, rather than ascetic detachment, is seen as the source of power necessary to transcend mundane existence. Marriage, prohibited to the Theravadin, tolerated by non-tantric Mahayanists (Allen 1973:2), becomes desirable for the Vajrayana Buddhist.

The evolution of modern-day Buddhism in Nepal is a complex issue. Allen's arguments and those of his detractors cannot be fully reviewed here. The question is whether it is legitimate to describe the Vajrayana Buddhism of Nepal as a decadent version of Buddhism which is dramatically different from anything ever known to India, and anathema to those Buddhists who did live there.¹⁷ I maintain it is neither legitimate nor enlightening to do so.

Most writers agree that forces similar to those which shaped Buddhist practices and beliefs in Nepal were also present in India. The coexistence of Hinduism and Buddhism and the influence of tantra on both were undeniably important features of the religious traditions of India prior to the demise of Buddhism there (Basham 1967:267-8). It is a mistake to assume that the merely durable traces of a tradition long dead in India are sufficient to adequately reconstruct it. The secrecy which shielded much of tantricism and the reliance of tantric adepts on oral teachings as opposed to texts, combined with the relative silence of the householder as compared with the monk in the historical record, make it difficult to reconstruct medieval Indian religious practices, not to speak of

¹⁶The actual role of ritual intercourse is impossible to determine due to the secrecy which surrounds it. Locke and others seem to agree that the act has been replaced by its visual representation.

¹⁷See Wayman (1980:361) for a refutation of the notion that tantra contributed to the decay of Indian Buddhism.

beliefs. What we do know should prompt us to consider the religious traditions of Nepal as potentially revealing with regard to Indian history¹⁸ rather than consider our scant knowledge of medieval Indian Buddhist practices as a basis for disparaging Newar Buddhism.

Given that one understands the distinction between historical reconstruction and ethnography, one may look to India for enlightenment in understanding Nepal and vice-versa. Toffin has described the Indian heritage of Newar culture as follows:

Les Néwars sont en effet en contact depuis plus de deux millénaires avec l'Inde, avec des temps forts et des temps faibles. Bien qu'ils aient conservé des traditions qui leur soient propres et qu'ils aient fondé une civilisation tout à fait originale, unique en Asie du Sud, ils ont tiré de l'Inde l'essentiel de leurs institutions sociales et de leurs croyances religieuses. La culture indienne n'a pas seulement pénétré dans les villes, parmi les castes les plus lettrées, mais aussi dans les villages, parmi les paysans, même s'il y a des nuances et des degrés selon les milieux. De sorte que l'ethnologue s'exposerait à méconnaître la nature profonde des Néwar s'il n'intégrait pas à son étude la dimension historico-culturelle et s'il n'était pas formé à l'indianisme. (1984:23)

The existence of Tibetan *gompas* in two of the principal *bāhās* of Patan as well as various customs and legends with Tibetan referents, suggest that Tibet, too, had a more important role to play in the evolution of Newari culture than is

¹⁸Jaini (1980) has compared the fates of Buddhism and Jainism in India in a fashion analogous to that proposed here. His conclusion that the popularity of the cult of the *Bodhisattva* contributed to the Hindu absorption of Buddhism will be examined further below. The Nepalese case could very well be used to counter his arguments, for the cult of the *Bodhisattva* is central to the vitality of Mahayana Buddhism in Nepal today.

commonly acknowledged.¹⁹ Tibet itself, however, ultimately looked to the South as the source of its tradition and, until the decline of Buddhism in India after Mughal rule, relied upon the vigor of Indian institutions for the rejuvenation of their own. Many have suggested that Tibetan institutions then turned to Nepal as a source of refinement and renewal.

The Origins of Newar Culture and the Evolution of Newar Ethnicity

Having tentatively situated Nepal and the Newar in a larger South Asian context, it is now necessary to situate the Newar within Nepal. The identity of the earliest inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley is the subject of much debate which will remain unresolved at least until extensive archeological research is conducted. Because many of the most promising sites for archaeological research are still important centers of a continuous tradition of devotional activity, it is unlikely that this research will take place any time in the near future. The historical record begins in A.D. 464 with an inscription erected at a lavish shrine which describes the four previous generations of the then ruling dynasty, a point in time which is obviously rather late in the evolution of Kathmandu valley civilization.

Most speculation concerning the Licchavis, the first dynasty in Nepal to leave any historical evidence of their existence, lends further support to Levi's notion that Nepal is a pre-islamic, pre-colonial India realized in the present, for most agree that they came to the hills of Nepal from northeastern India. It is

¹⁹Lewis has related numerous customs among the *Tuladhar* which reflect Tibetan influence (1984:484-93) and more recently described Tibetan elements in *Samyek*, one of the most important *jātrās* in the Buddhist ritual calendar (1987). Gellner has offered a contrary opinion concerning both the antiquity and pervasiveness of Tibetan influence (1986:118) which does not stand in the light of Lewis' work.

unclear what prompted their arrival, though control over the trade which passed through the country may have been a motive. The *Gopālarājavamśāvalī* records that the Licchavis conquered the "Kirata" king in order to seize power (Slusser 1982:22). Though we have no firm historical evidence of any rulers prior to the Licchavis, Newar popular belief preserves the notion that the "Kirata" were among their ancient predecessors.²⁰ The Kathmandu valley civilization of today, and the Newar who are most closely identified with it, are the products of thousands of years of assimilation and influence from other cultures.

The Newar are popularly described as the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley, a description which belies the complexity of their heritage, but properly emphasizes their identification with the culture of the valley. The actual use of the term "Newar" to identify a people is relatively new. The first written examples we have of the term Newar used in the sense of ethnic group are only about 300 years old,²¹ though the historical record of the valley goes back some 1,500 years.

There is currently a great deal of debate concerning the evolution and current status of Newar ethnic identity among Newar, non-Newar Nepalese, and foreign scholars.²² The complexity of this debate reflects the ideological, linguistic,

²⁰A large mound near the center of Patan is popularly believed to be the ruins of a Kirata palace. Spirits of these ancient rulers are said to wreak vengeance on anyone who tampers with the ruins of their palace, and the untimely demise of a local resident who attempted to plant a garden there is cited as proof of this danger.

²¹Theodore Riccardi, Jr. "The Royal Edicts of King Rama Shah of Gorkha," *Kailash*, 1977, 5(1), p. 54.

²²See above, pp. 20-21; also Malla 1987, 1984; Gellner 1986, Quigley 1987, and Pant 1984.

and social diversity which the Newar encompass, as well as differing attitudes among the Newar regarding their own identity. Most scholars agree that two major historical factors have had tremendous impact on the evolution of Newar ethnicity.

The first of these is the conquest of the Kathmandu valley by the hill Kingdom of Gorkha in 1768. Toffin (1975) and others have noted that to describe the Newar as united, even in opposition to their common enemy, the Gorkhalis, is false. As Gellner (1986) points out, one of the early uses of the term "Newar" to refer to an ethnic group actually occurs in a chronicle describing a Khas invasion from the west, and refers to infighting among the Newar in spite of the threat from outside the valley.

For nearly 300 years prior to its conquest, the Kathmandu valley had been ruled by the three independent Kingdoms of Patan, Kathmandu, and Bhaktapur. Born of competition among six joint heirs to the throne of Yakshamalla (d.1482), these kingdoms feuded intermittently from the moment of their creation to their defeat (Slusser 1982:61). The promotion of their own self-interests in relation to Prithvinarayan pitted one kingdom against the other, contributing to the relative ease with which Prithvinarayan was able to gain control of the valley (Wright 1972:256-8, Toffin 1975:35).²³ However, it is certain that a shared defeat and ruler, if not invading enemy, promoted a new kind of common identity among the

²³The collaboration of Ranjit Malla of Bhaktapur in Prithvinarayan's capture of Nuwakot is most often cited as an example of this duplicity (see Stiller 1975:114-115).

subjects of these kingdoms, albeit, belatedly.²⁴ Prior to their defeat, the designation "Newar" primarily referred to the inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley.²⁵ The coexistence of conquerors and conquered in the valley, if nothing else, demanded that the designation "Newar" take on new meaning.

The second historical development which further stimulated the evolution of Newar ethnic identity was the repression Newars suffered as a group under the Rana regime from the middle of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. Even those who would deny that Newar ethnicity exists acknowledge the powerful "sentiments," evoked by memories of this period, which unite Newari speakers.²⁶ The martyrdom of three Newars who opposed the regime,²⁷ the prohibition of publishing in the Newari language, and the expulsion of a largely Newar Theravedic Buddhist community whose opposition to caste angered the

²⁴Stiller (1973:120-121) suggests that there was significant unity among valley inhabitants even during Prithvinarayan's earliest attempts to capture Kirtipur. One explanation he offers for this unity is the hardship that the Gorkhalis had begun to impose upon the peasantry. As an example of this, Stiller states that Prithvinarayan had prohibited villagers from outlying regions under his control to visit Matsyendranath's *rath jātrā* in Patan unless the leaders of Patan paid him ransom.

²⁵Most scholars agree that the designation "Nepal" was applied only to the valley and its immediate environs prior to unification under Prithvinarayan Shah. This usage is still current among some hill peoples who, though citizens of the nation of Nepal, will say they are going to Nepal if en route to the Kathmandu valley. The phonetic similarity between "Newar" and "Nepal", or *newā:* and *nepā:* as pronounced in Newari, has often been cited as proof that the origin of the name "Newar" is the name of the place with which they were identified.

²⁶Dor Bahadur Bista, personal communication, 1983.

²⁷Eight members of *Nepāl Praja Parishad* (Nepal People's Movement) were arrested in 1940 and tried in connection with their publication of a pamphlet encouraging the overthrow of the Ranas. Four of the eight were Brahmins, thus exempt from execution under Nepalese law. The other four, of whom three were Newars, were executed and became known as martyrs. (Gellner 1986:134)

Ranas (Kloppenbergs 1977), all contributed to the evolution of Newar ethnicity as a source of political solidarity. Toffin has stated that Rana repression constituted a new form of discrimination against the Newar:

La répression [Rana] contre les Newar va prendre une dimension nouvelle: elle va s'attaquer à leur littérature et à leur langue. Toute manifestation culturelle est interdite, la vie intellectuelle dans son ensemble et réduite à néant par une censure étouffante. (1977:14)

Newars over forty years old, no matter what their social status, are likely to recall this period of repression in personal terms. Younger Newars are apt to know of the former repression of their language, and of the three Newar martyrs.

More recent policies of the present government, including discontinuing Newari language broadcasting on the National radio station and adopting new official names for the Newari language (formerly *Nepal Bhasa*, now *Newari Bhasa*) and the *Nepal Sambat* (to become *Newar Sambat*), have further contributed to the political component of Newar ethnicity by alienating Newars as a group. Since 1977 the Newar have seized upon their New Year, distinct from the Vikram Sambat New Year celebrated by the government, as a rallying point for Newar solidarity.

Newar and Parbatiya Perspectives on Newar Society

Any effort to politically unite the Newar population must overcome its diversity. This same challenge confronts anyone who attempts to define Newar society in general terms. The most succinct definition of Newar identity I have heard was offered by one Newar to another in reference to me. While participating in a feast which included hundreds of people, a Newar woman asked a Newar friend of mine who I was. Feigning indignation, he responded, "He speaks Newari, eats *baji* (flattened rice), and drinks *aylā*: (rice liquor); he's a Newar." Apart from being tremendously gratifying for the ethnographer, this statement neatly

summarizes three fundamental aspects of Newar society which both the Newar and others use to distinguish Newar from non-Newar, particularly the *Bāhun-Chetri*.²⁸

Language and Newar identity

"He speaks Newari" is perhaps the most important of all of these qualifications. Though some who live in predominately non-Newar hill settlements and scarcely speak Newari will call themselves Newars, language is, for the most part, the most important means of expressing Newar ethnic identity. An editorial in the Newari weekly, *Inap*, offers an extreme point of view regarding the relative importance of language as a component of Newar identity, "...the meaning of Newar is given neither by religion, nor by *jati*, nor by custom. Rather it is based on language" (1,37:2, Oct. 28, 1983, as cited by Gellner, 1986).

A common *Bāhun-Chetri* epithet for "Newar," *gathamathama*, echoes the distinctive quality of the Newar language, for it imitates the unusual manner in which Newars pronounce retroflex t's. Newari has Tibeto-Burman roots and is semi-tonal,²⁹ whereas Nepali is Indo-European and not tonal. They share little in vocabulary or sound beyond what one has borrowed from the other, with far more

²⁸I use *Bāhun-Chetri* here to connote *Parbatiyā* society, of which the *Bāhun-Chetri jāts* are the exemplars. *Parbatiyā* society, of course, includes the *Dom*, or service castes, without whom neither the *Bāhun* nor the *Chetri* could maintain their status. The most marked contrasts with the Newar pertain to the *Bāhun-Chetri* proper.

²⁹The degree to which Newari is considered a tonal language is a matter of debate. Those who describe it as semi-tonal point to the phonemic distinctions between aspirated and unaspirated initial "m" sounds, the former being pronounced with a resonance which is tonal in nature. The extreme phonemic contrast associated with this subtle phonetic distinction, as in *mhamphu* (healthy), *maphu* (sick); *mham̐syū* I know [him]), and *masyū* (I don't know) suggests that tonality may have played a greater role in the past and been more pronounced.

borrowing in Newari from Nepali than vice-versa. Recent efforts at promoting the Newari language have resulted in conscious efforts to replace Nepali loan words with Newari, and a renewed interest in learning the archaic and distinctive Newari scripts.³⁰

Just as their language serves to unite Newars, so does it serve to distinguish different segments of Newar society. Dialects vary, sometimes considerably, with locale and caste. Newars delight in noting, for example, that the word for water in Bhaktapur, *nā*, means "sewage" to Newars elsewhere. Many Newars in Kathmandu and Patan state that they have difficulty understanding the Bhaktapur dialect, and the dialect spoken in Dholakha, some forty miles east of the Kathmandu valley, is virtually unintelligible to valley Newars.

Feasts in Newar Society and Religion

The fact that "he eats *baji*" is significant because *baji* is here a metonymic reference to feasts. *Baji* is flattened and dried par-boiled rice, and can be shared by members of different castes without the implications for caste status entailed in sharing boiled rice. It is therefore feast food par excellence. A well-known Nepali saying reflects the distinctive importance of feasts among the Newars: "*Newar bigrine bhojle, pahāri bigrine mojhle*," (Newars destroy themselves through feasting, the hill people (*Bāhun-Chetri*) destroy themselves through sensual pleasure.) Though I usually visited Bungamati unannounced, it was rare that I did not get invited to at least one feast during my typically short visits of a day or two. During festivals, it was not unusual for me to be obligated to eat two or more

³⁰Newars often cite the fact that *ranjana*, a decorative Newar script, is the official script of Nepal registered with the United Nations. In the international arena, distinguishing Nepal from India, which also uses the *devanagari* script commonly used for Nepali and Newari, was evidently more important to the Nepalese government than asserting Gorkhali supremacy.

feasts in one day; a problem which is shared, though perhaps to a lesser degree, by Newars as well.

Just as the Newar are considered distinctive by non-Newars because of their propensity for feasting, the Newar distinguish among themselves by noting subtle differences in the feasts of different *jāts* or localities.³¹ The importance of feasts for the Newar lies not only in their profusion, but their social and ritual significance as well. A feast culminates almost every ritual involving a group of people. At the conclusion of most rituals, prior to the feast, all participants are given a *tika* mark on their forehead by the *pujari*. This *tika* is considered part of the *prasād* blessed by whatever deity was honored and also functions as a public mark of devotion. Often, when a friend spotted a *tika* on my forehead, he or she would ask "Have you eaten a feast?" (*Chi bhwe nayaduna lā?*) rather than inquire about the actual ritual which was the source of the *tika*. One of the few *vajrācārya pānjus* who has many *jajmans*, and therefore performs many *pujās*, boasted to me that he hardly ever has to eat at home, for he is always feasting. The primary expense incurred by most *guthīs* formed for the purpose of annual religious observances is for the feasts which always follow their annual rituals.³²

³¹The Newar woman from Kathmandu who cooked for me was often unfamiliar with dishes I ate in Bungamati, as were the *Bungepim* unacquainted with some of the dishes she prepared. The *Śresthās* with whom I feasted in Patan considered a *bhwe* incomplete without a final dish of bitter fenugreek soup (*mī*), whereas my Buddhist hosts in Bungamati rarely included it.

³²This is based on a survey of all *guthīs* organized to honor Bungadya during the annual jatra. Most of these *guthīs* were either *Sannuhuguthīs* (who honor Bungadya on the first of each lunar month), or *guthīs* created to burn lamps in honor of Bungadya on the night of their *tol's Bhujha* (day after the *rath* reaches one of its four destinations).

The ritual significance of feasting is not only derived from the intimate association of the feast with ritual, but with the symbolic meaning of the feast itself. Ratna Kaji Vajracarya has discussed this at length in his *Jhigu Samṣkr̥t Ya Bve-ghāsā (Items of Our Food Culture)*³³ which describes the symbolic significance of different dishes and their composite meaning as parts of the whole *bhwe* menu. He includes a *maṇḍala* feast diagram which identifies different divinities with different side dishes (*ghāsās*) (ibid:50-51). Though Vajracarya acknowledges that this latter conceptualization of the feast is obscure, the association of gods with food is widely recognized in that food which is eaten in a feast following a *pujā* is considered *prasād*, a gift from a god. The host of a feast will often allude to this fact as a ploy to get an over-stuffed eater to eat yet more. To refuse the hospitality of a Newar is a serious breach of etiquette. But to refuse the hospitality of a god, the overly attentive host implies, would entail repercussions of a more cosmic, and therefore serious, nature.

Alcohol Consumption and Newar Caste Status

The Newar also differ from the *Bāhun-Chetri* by virtue of the fact that nearly all Newar *jāts* consume alcohol. Only the *Rājopadhyay* theoretically risk loss of caste status by drinking. The Newar are anomalous because Newar cord-wearing *jāts*, such as the *Sesya*:, consume alcohol in contravention of Hindu orthodoxy.

One of the most complete efforts to codify caste laws in the history of South Asia was compiled in 1854 at the behest of Jang Bahadur Rana, the first Prime Minister of the Rana regime. Born of the necessity to consolidate political authority

³³A more literal translation would be "Our culture's feast dishes". *Ghāsās* are dishes which accompany the copious quantities of *baji* offered in a feast.

over a nation fraught with instability, this legal code attempted to ascribe a uniform hierarchy of status to a highly diverse population (Höfer 1979:39). Called the *Muluki Ain* (law of the land), it offers a unique perspective on the overlapping caste hierarchies of the Newar and *Parbatiyā* societies. These hierarchies were expressed by the Ain's *Bāhun-Chetri* formulators in terms of stipulated consequences of various kinds of inter- and intra-jāt offenses.

Andras Höfer (1979) has examined these laws and reconstructed the principals and caste hierarchies on which they were based. Accommodating the Newar caste hierarchy within an all-embracing hierarchy seems to have been problematic for the law-makers precisely because of the anomalous consumption of alcohol by Newar *jatadhari* (cord-wearing) *jāts*.³⁴ This contributed to inconsistencies in the code. At one point, all Newar are classified as *matwali* (alcohol drinkers), and the *Dev Bhaju* (*Rājopadhyay*) are considered apart. At another point in the text, it appears that Newar cord-wearers are ranked below *Parbatiyā* cord-wearers, yet above the "non-enslaveable alcohol drinker" (Ibid:138).

Because it is difficult to assess the degree to which this document actually mirrored society, the evidence of the *ain* is presented here simply to confirm that in the nineteenth century, the propensity for nearly all Newar *jāts* to drink alcohol distinguished them from their *Parbatiyā* neighbors. This distinction remains and is one that Newars are likely to make themselves either proudly or in ironic self-disparagement. Unless it is a special occasion, it is relatively rare for a visitor to be spontaneously offered beer or distilled spirits in a *Parbatiyā* household; tea is more normally served. In predominantly Newar Bungamati it is rare that anyone

³⁴Cord-wearing *jāts* are those entitled to wear the sacred thread, indicative of their "twice-born" status. The "twice-born" designation refers to the ritual of rebirth which is a prerequisite to wearing the sacred thread (*janai* (Np.), *jana* (Nw.)).

offers tea, but either beer or rice liquor are offered at all hours. It was not unusual for a host to initially explain, while pouring me a glass of *aylā:* or *thvam*, that "It is not our custom to drink tea, what to do?" (*Jimi chya twanegu chalan madu, chu yāye?*).

The first meal of the day for many villagers consists of flattened rice and rice liquor, often consumed at sunrise to prepare oneself for work in the fields. Toffin has described his frustration at gathering information from the inhabitants of the small village of Pyangaon during their festivals, one of the few occasions in which people were generally available for casual conversation. "Ce n'est qu'au moment des fêtes que la localité s'anime, mais à ce moment là, presque tout le monde - hommes, femmes et enfants -est ivre." (1984:18) Of these three characteristics, speaking Newari, feasting, and drinking alcohol, the latter is least likely to be cited by the Newar as a distinctive feature of their culture. However, for most Newars, alcoholic beverages, often both *thvam* and *aylā:*, are considered indispensable parts of their beloved feasts.³⁵ Recall that the *Parbatiyā* say that the Newar fondness for feasting is what destroys the Newar.³⁶

These three features of Newar society are all points of contrast between the Newar and *Bāhun-Chetris* which members of both groups are likely to cite. We now turn to an examination of Newar society from a more distant perspective, emphasizing that which the anthropologist is most likely to consider as significant in broader comparisons.

³⁵ The government licenses a few individuals to produce distilled alcoholic beverages for traditional religious feasts. Unlicensed private production, though illegal, is rampant.

³⁶ It was, after all, during the festivities of *Indra Jātrā* that Prithvinarayan Shah simply marched into Kathmandu and took the place of Jayaprakash Malla on the royal dais set up for the festival (see Stiller 1973:29-30).

The Newar Population: A Demographic Overview

The most striking feature of Newar settlements which distinguishes them from those of their *Parbatiyā* neighbors is their compact density. The population density in the Kathmandu valley reaches levels which are among the highest in the world. In central Kathmandu, where buildings are seldom over five stories high, densities reach 75,000 people per square kilometer (Gutschow 1980b:61).³⁷ Even Newar villages of only a thousand inhabitants seem like small towns, for houses are usually several stories high and abut one another, enclosing courtyards and lining narrow lanes. Most settlements are located on elevated sites, surrounded by cultivated fields. These sites provide security as well as maximize the efficient use of more arable lower lands.

The 1971 census states that the Newar comprise 47% of the Kathmandu valley's population of over 620,000 people, with most of the remaining half comprised of *Parbatiyā* (Ibid:48). These figures need to be considered with some caution, however, for they most probably underreport Newars.³⁸

Though the Newar comprise a narrow majority among residents of the Kathmandu valley, their total population of about one half million, including those living outside the valley, constitutes only 4.6% of the total population of Nepal. Though the Newar complain of underrepresentation in government posts, this

³⁷ Toffin (1984:48) states far more modestly that density reaches levels of 1,000/km². I suspect the truth lies somewhere in between, most certainly exceeding Manhattan's population density of approximately 17,000/km².

³⁸ The census based this figure on how individuals responded when asked what language he or she spoke at home. The national interest in promoting Nepali as the official language, combined with the current tendency for upwardly mobile Newar families to speak Nepali at home, make it likely that many of Newar descent were not counted as such.

complaint is based on their majority status in the Kathmandu valley. Rishikesh Shah has pointed out that in 1975, nearly one quarter of 292 high functionary posts in government were held by Newars (Shah 1975:57).

Newar Occupations

Toffin states that the Newar population is principally comprised of merchants (40%), agriculturalists (40%), and artisans (20%), all occupations for which the Newar are justly famous (Toffin, 1984:16). The wealth of the Kathmandu valley derived primarily from the former two. These two sources of the valley's wealth, trade and agriculture, supported the development of the finest artisanry of Nepal, discernable in the architecture of even the humblest of Newar villages.

Agriculture

The rich lacustrine soil of the Kathmandu valley, worked by skillful agriculturalists, yields tremendous agricultural productivity with up to three crops a year. It is more accurate to say that the valley is gardenized, rather than farmed, such is the intensity of labor expended in predominately terraced wet-rice agriculture.³⁹ The Newar accomplish this high level of productivity largely without the plow, for most refuse to use it, citing a religious prohibition as their reason.⁴⁰ The tool used in the plow's stead, a kind of hoe called a *kū*, is only about two feet long and requires working very close to the ground. The *kū* is apparently well suited to the dense clay soil of the valley and convenient for the maintenance of

³⁹I am indebted to Katherine Coon, an agricultural expert with extensive experience in Nepal, for this observation.

⁴⁰Webster (1981) has noted that not all Newar shun the plow, and has offered some imaginative, if not plausible, hypotheses for both the rule and its exceptions.

terrace walls, but the Newar using a *kū* appears to the outsider to be tending a small garden rather than cultivating crops.

The character of their settlements, combined with a Newar tendency to retain some land suitable for rice cultivation for security no matter what their occupation (Quigley 1987:167), results in the phenomenon of the urban agriculturalist. Even in Patan, the second largest city in the valley (pop. 59,000), 36% of the inhabitants farm as their principle occupation.⁴¹

Though the residents of rural Bungamati are increasingly finding employment as carpenters and masons or in the service sector in Patan or Kathmandu, the majority still farm as their principle means of livelihood. As late as 1969 it was possible for Chakramehr Vajracharya to write of Bungamati that "...market exchange transactions, even at present, seem only of minor importance as a means of livelihood." (Vajracharya 1969:35) Though the importance of the cash economy has significantly increased, the bulk of food consumed in Bungamati is produced there. Some have suggested that the draw of employment in the larger towns combined with the agricultural incentives created by international development agencies, have made Bungamati increasingly agriculturally oriented at the expense of traditional artisanry (Neilsen 1972).

Agriculture throughout the valley is highly dependent on the monsoon rains. Though the valley is laced with rivers and their tributaries, many of these all but dry up in the dry season. Once the rains arrive, a complex web of irrigation canals, many only inches wide, channel water from swollen rivers and fields flooded by runoff to rice paddy which is often far above the nearest river. This

⁴¹Toffin (1984:54) also states that fifteen percent of Kathmandu and sixty-five percent of Bhaktapur residents are farmers.

dependency on rainfall is one of the major factors which contribute to the importance of Bungadya, who is said to bring the monsoon rains.

Trade

Until the British Younghusband expedition in 1903 opened up an easier route via Kalimpong, the principle routes from India to Tibet passed through the Kathmandu valley and over the Krong and Kodari passes (Lewis 1984:487). Taxes on goods passing through their realms were a major source of income for the early rulers of the valley (ibid.).⁴² Several have suggested that one of the most successful of Prithvinarayan's military strategies was his economic blockade of the valley, and that Newar traders ultimately welcomed his conquest as a means of resuming trade. The consequent end of the blockade not only allowed them to resume commerce with Tibet, but also enabled Newar merchants to expand into newly conquered principalities in the West of Nepal as well (Regmi 1971:11, Quigley 1987:155).

Newar traders also constituted an important link with Tibet, and maintained control over Tibetan trade even after Gorkhali conquest (Lewis 1984:487). Many Newars established businesses and second homes in Lhasa, and because they often stayed for years at a time, it was not unusual for them to take Tibetan second wives.⁴³ Tibet supplied Nepal with gold bullion in exchange for coinage in an arrangement that was highly beneficial to Nepal and which was occasionally a

⁴²Kathmandu functioned as an entrepôt as well as caravansary, for the malaria-ridden jungles of the south had to be traversed in the cold season, whereas the passes to the north, though open year round, were more hospitable in warmer weather.

⁴³In an interesting manifestation of the "When in Rome..." spirit, some Newar brothers shared Tibetan wives in contravention of Newar mores but in parsimonious observance of Tibetan custom.

major source of friction between the two countries. Ironically, the importance of this agreement compelled Jayaprakash Malla to intercede on behalf of his eventual conquerer, Prithvinarayan, to prevent Tibetan interference with Gorkha (Slusser 1982:70). These important commercial ties, maintained chiefly by Newars, have always been accompanied by important cultural exchange as well, which will be discussed further below.⁴⁴

Kathmandu remains the commercial center of Nepal for imported and domestic goods, serving not only Nepalis, but Indians who come to escape the highly protected Indian market and find bargains imported from Hong Kong and Bangkok. Though the Newar no longer dominate all sectors of trade in the valley, they are still the principal purveyors of foodstuffs and household goods, particularly those manufactured locally. Indian Marwari merchants have become important importers of luxury goods, fine textiles, and, at the other end of the economic scale, fresh fruit trucked from the south. Though the Indian merchant is becoming ubiquitous in the more modernized parts of Kathmandu, it is still rare to find a shop-keeper of any kind in Patan or Bhaktapur who is not a Newar.

Artisanry

The Newar have had an international reputation for their artisanship for centuries. Kublai Khan is said to have commissioned Arniko and a group of Newar architects to come to China to build a golden stupa, and legend has it that Arniko brought the pagoda building style with him.⁴⁵ During what is widely regarded as

⁴⁴For a more complete consideration of this topic, see Lewis 1984:483-494, 1986, and 1987.

⁴⁵In support of the Nepalese origin of the pagoda style of architecture is the fact that Chinese travellers in the seventh century expressed surprise upon seeing pagodas, which were new to them.

the golden age of Newar culture, the early Malla period, Newar craftsmen supplied much of the art installed in Tibetan monasteries, and the Newar aesthetic was a major influence on the Tibetan one (Slusser 1984:70-71).⁴⁶

Tibetans continue to patronize Newar craftsmen, who provide them religious art and architectural elements to be installed in Nepal and abroad. From the beginning of 1982 through 1984, major commissions for repoussé prayer wheels, metal flags, instruments, and large architectural elements were executed in Patan, the center of metalworking in the valley, for Tibetan refugee clients in India, Bhutan, and the United States. The burgeoning growth of Tibetan *gompas* in the valley is also an important force in the preservation of the fine metalworking crafts.⁴⁷ The Newar community patronizes these metal-working craftsmen as well as woodcarvers and painters, though not as often for significant religious art as in the past. Contributing to the artistic and architectural richness of the valley is a traditional means of devotional expression for both Hindus and Buddhists. Intricately decorated resthouses (Nw. *patti* or *phalca*), water spouts and tanks (*hitti* and *phuku*) were offered by devotees with disposable capital they wished to spend for the public good and their own merit. Relatively new access to a panoply of other means of conspicuous expenditure has undoubtedly contributed to the waning of this practice. Decorations including metal banners (*patāha*), head ornaments (*kikimpā*) and other jewelry, and clothing are more commonly being

⁴⁶It is clearly problematic to discuss Newars as a group prior to any historical use of the term in this manner. The Malla Kings, though they never described themselves as Newar, ruled over the people of the valley who were ultimately to adopt this designation, and the Newar regard them as their own.

⁴⁷The colossal Sakyamuni figure which dominates the Tibetan *gompā* Karmaraja Mahavihara at Swayambhu, for example, was executed by a *Śākya* artist of U Baha in Patan (Alsop 1983, personal communication).

commissioned and offered to gods and their temples.⁴⁸ Images of gods are still made on behalf of donors, though rarely.

Unfortunately, resources and creative energies which were once directed to the creation of new treasures are now often diverted to the preservation of the old against theft, often with disastrously disfiguring results which obscure to the point of obliteration that which is ostensibly protected.⁴⁹ In many cases, new works are produced in order to replace that which has been stolen, rather than to create anew.⁵⁰

Cooking and household utensils, musical instruments, and tourist items comprise the bulk of contemporary metalwork production. Tamrakar craftsmen make gigantic pots used for feasts, traditional *gha* for fetching water and many other utensils. Jewelers, primarily Śākyas, produce ornaments for weddings and

⁴⁸Two new coin necklaces (*mohamalla*), one new *kikimpā* and numerous new cloth *bhotos* (shirts) were offered to Bungadya during the *jātrās* of 1982 through 1984.

⁴⁹The most tragic example of this trend is to be found at Jana Baha, where the central temple of Janmadya, one of the most richly decorated in the valley, is completely enclosed in a wrought iron cage, making it impossible for anyone to see the intricate decoration for which the temple is famous.

⁵⁰Shortly before my arrival in Nepal, twelve important scroll paintings (*paubāhās*), were stolen from Bungamati. These paintings depicted stories in the *Gunakārandavyūha sūtras*, and were displayed during the month of *Gunla* and at *Bijaye puṣṭā* (see Appendix A). The people of Bungamati commissioned a Tamang painter from Bauddhanath to do the paintings, Newar painters being far too expensive. The *pānju*s solicited funds to replace these paintings from villagers and others who came to Bungamati on festival days. I became involved in the fund raising effort at the behest of a *pānju*, who accompanied me on one occasion while I was distributing prints of a group involved in a *puṣṭā* at which he had officiated. Though I offered the prints as gifts, he suggested that the recipients make a small donation to the *paubāhā* fund if they so desired. All but one of twenty individuals made a donation of at least one rupee, and indicated their approval of our campaign.

other ritual occasions as well as for the tourist trade. Wood carvers also produce for the tourist market, and the never-ending task of building restoration (often initiated by foreign agencies) requires their skills in refurbishing intricately carved traditional windows and struts.⁵¹ Painters produce in prodigious quantity for the tourist market, and less frequently create finely executed images for religious purposes. Inexpensive festival art is mass-produced by hand on thin paper for occasions such as *gai jātrā*, and *nāg pancamī*. Many intricate rituals call for painted paper flags and images of gods as well as painted pottery, and life-cycle rites such as weddings, *īni pujās*, and *jankos*, also call for hand painted or block printed images.

The Newar engage in many other crafts, including weaving, textile printing, pottery, stone masonry, and basket making. In short, they have long been self-sufficient in the skills required to produce nearly everything their traditional culture requires, from the precious sculptures they worship to the straw mats upon which they sit. They have also ingeniously taken advantage of the trade which passes through their midst and developed an efficient means of producing an abundant food supply. The multiplicity of occupations in which the Newar engage is reflected in the numerous Newar castes and sub-castes which are associated with specialized occupations. The Newar caste system is unusually complex by virtue

⁵¹Several *Vajracāryā* carpenters from Bungamati, including one panju, were regularly employed as restorers by a hotel in Kathmandu which features an extensive collection of traditional woodcarving as part of its architectural detail. Shepard (1985) discusses the traditional role of the woodworker. For further discussion concerning the problems of restoration see Amataya (1986) for traditional institutions concerned with temple preservation, and Sekler (1977 and 1986) for Western approaches to the same problem. The extensive literature on the early phases of the German Bhaktapur Development Project is also informative in this regard.

of the diversity which it encompasses, and shall be considered in the following section.

Newar Caste System

Louis Dumont, in an important article published in 1964, concluded that the Newar neither constitute a caste, nor have castes among them. Though this remarkable conclusion has been widely discredited, it still prompts prominent ethnographers in the field to defend their descriptions of the Newar caste system against his assertion (cf. Toffin 1984:221). Dumont's early conclusion was based on inadequate ethnographic material⁵² which led him to confound castes with sub-castes. To this confused picture he arbitrarily applied rigid criteria for identifying caste systems.⁵³

Quigley has recently taken the extreme opposite position. He states that "Newars are very conscious of their ethnic separateness from other groups. The

⁵²Dumont's knowledge of the Newar was based on articles published by Fűr Haimmendorf on the basis of his own field work and information provided by Rosser. Fűr-Haimmendorf, in his rejoinder to Dumont contained in the same issue, makes a point of stating that his work on the Newar was "preliminary" and that there were "...numerous gaps in his knowledge of Newar marriage...." One such error which has a profound effect on Dumont's analysis is that the children of *Śākya* fathers and *Vajrācārya* mothers do assume father's lower *Śākya* status and not the mother's (Locke 1980:11 n.7 confirms my own information) his assertion to the contrary is the only example he presents to suggest that the "status groups" among the Newar do not constitute castes.

⁵³Though Dumont's explanation for denying that Newar society has castes is oblique, one point which seems to determine his conclusion is that the Newar are divided into "...status groups which may be absolutely endogamous at one end and exogamous at the other." (1964:98) Yet, in the same article, he acknowledges that among the Rajputs, whom he does not deny caste, "...strict hypergamy entailed ... a breach of endogamy ... as the men at the bottom had to marry somewhere." (Ibid:92)

single most crucial fact in this respect is the existence of their own autonomous caste system." (1987:156) Though, as I have stated above, language seems to play a more important role in the Newar consciousness of Newar identity, Quigley is far closer to the truth than is Dumont. The sheer complexity of the Newar caste system may have led Dumont to miss the forest for the trees.⁵⁴

Caste Boundaries

The Newar delineate caste boundaries primarily on the basis of three behavioral criteria: physical proximity, commensality, and marriage. Certain activities, such as washing soiled clothes, killing animals, or forging iron, are considered polluting and are therefore also criteria for caste identity, for they are relegated to certain castes and avoided by others. These basic criteria for caste membership and exclusion are applied with varying degrees of rigor among the Newar, depending particularly upon the locality and castes concerned.

Physical Proximity: At the bottom of the caste hierarchy there are those whom others may not touch without subsequently requiring purification (*thiye majyupim*). The principles of inter-caste proximity apply not only to physical contact, but to privileges of residential location and access to various parts of the Newar home as well. Untouchables usually reside at the periphery of Newar settlements, and are unlikely to be allowed in the homes of their caste superiors. Others are admitted to different areas of the home, depending on the extent of the difference between the caste status of the host and visitor. The Newar home is typically comprised

⁵⁴That Dumont should make this error is nonetheless surprising in light of his own observation that: "Castes are not homogeneous status groups hierarchized from outside, an ordered series of pigeon holes. ... The hierarchical principle does not stop at the outward boundary of each particular caste-group, it permeates it, and the caste boundary is only one more marked cleavage among others." (1964:83)

of several stories, and admittance to the higher stories is more restricted than to those below.

Commensality: Boundaries of commensality are defined in terms of three basic levels of intimacy: those with whom one may share cooked rice (*jā cale jyu pim*), those who share only feast food (*bhwe cale jyu pim*), and those from whom one may not take water (*la: cale majyupim*) (see Figure 1).⁵⁵ The first group includes only members of the same caste. Feasts, provided they only include foods which do not convey pollution,⁵⁶ may be shared with anyone from whom one may take water (*la: cale jyu pim*).⁵⁷ Those from whom one may not accept water, *la: cale majyupim*, are, in many cases, castes who traditionally engage in polluting occupations. Some feasts do include people from both sides of the water line,

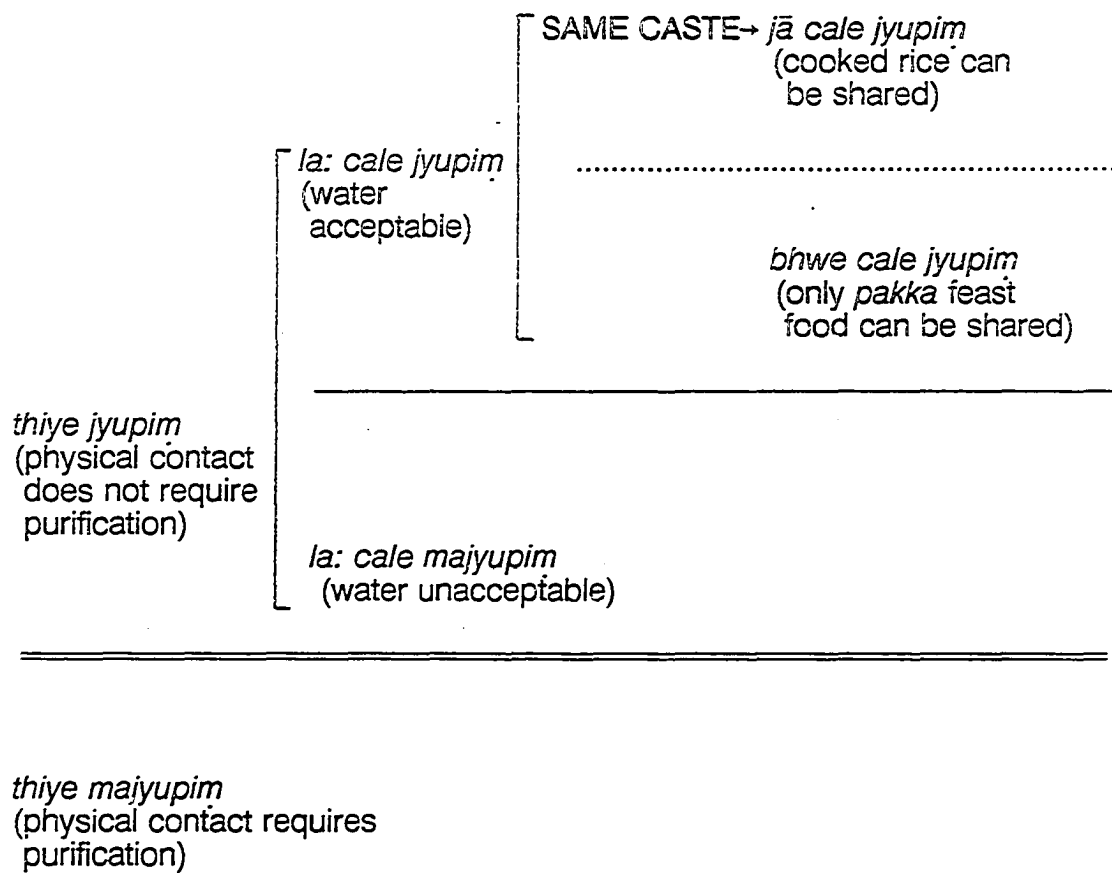
⁵⁵Commensality is also defined with respect to the *hukkha*, or water-pipe, which may be shared in several different ways or may not be shared at all, depending on the caste status of the individuals who are smoking together.

⁵⁶These foods are contrasted with foods which may transmit pollution, referred to in Hindi as *kacca*. *Kacca* and *pakka*, are terms used by Nepali speakers and elsewhere in the subcontinent to distinguish between foods which can convey pollution and those which cannot. These terms are seldom used by the Newar, though the concepts they convey are shared by the Newar who have no real equivalent terms (Toffin 1984:280). Foods which are not shared between castes include many foods which are cooked in water, particularly rice (*jā*) and lentil soup (*kem*, Nw., *dhāl* Np.), the mainstays of the Newar diet. Though Toffin (1984:280) maintains that foods cooked in water without being subsequently fried or roasted before serving are necessarily *kacca*, this principle is not an infallible predictor. *Ta:khā:*, for example, is a prized feast food made by boiling buffalo bones and scraps of meat with spices for hours. The resultant gelatinous stew is then allowed to cool, producing a buffalo *aspic à la campagne*.

⁵⁷These terms are often shortened simply to *jyupim* and *majyupim*, or "those with whom [it is] permitted" and "those with whom [it is] not permitted".

FIGURE I

Newar Caste and Categories
of Commensality and Proximity



though the *la: cale majyupim* usually dine at a discreet distance from the others.⁵⁹

Marriage and Commensality: Caste endogamous marriage is preferred, and is the only form of marriage which does not have negative consequences for the offspring if the father has accepted rice cooked by his wife. Hypergamous marriages are tolerated if they do not cross the "water acceptable line," and the children of a hypergamous couple may retain the status of their father if he is not commensal with his wife.

Children of a caste-hypergamous commensal couple may assume a caste status between that of their father and mother, and their grandchildren may re-assume the status of their grandfather if subsequent marriages (and other conduct) have been appropriate. Hypergamous marriages which cross the water acceptability barrier entail loss of caste for the groom, as well as the consequent loss of clan membership and commensal rights with his agnatic kin. Hypogamous marriages generally involve the same consequences for the wife, whether or not the groom is one from whom water is acceptable.

All of these criteria may be manipulated by those within the system, whether to segregate oneself from one's peers and emulate the practices of one's superiors, or to reenforce the status quo. The ways in which hospitality is offered and accepted (or refused), for example, may challenge status, convey acceptance as an equal, or pay respect to a superior. Observable practices concerning these features of social interaction may, therefore, reveal more of an individual's or

⁵⁹Toffin (1984:281) points out, however, that raw foods may be shared by anyone, and the the untouchable *Pore* sell fish to all castes. It is also ironic that the *Nai* butchers, from whom *iyupim* may not accept water, have cornered the dairy trade and are notorious for adding water to the milk they sell. Untouchables may also share feasts on special occasions. Nepali was informed that a *Pore* assumes the first place of honor for the annual feast of Kirtipur (Nepali 1965:186).

group's aspirations or pretense than a wide-based consensus concerning their caste status.

These distinctions which define Newar caste boundaries do not vary substantially from the principles which are the basis of most caste systems. This is particularly true of the *Parbatiyā* caste system in Nepal, which includes intermediate caste groups comprised of the offspring of caste exogamous marriages.⁶⁰ The Newar caste system is, however, distinctive from the Nepalese *Parbatiyā* system in several respects, most notably in terms of its variability and complexity.

Caste Hierarchy: Castes, Sub-castes, and Caste isogamy

The *Sesya*: constitute the most extreme example of this complexity.⁶¹ This group of Hindu cord-wearers (*tāgādhārī*) encompasses two endogamous groups of lineages⁶², the *cāthare* and the *Pāncathare*,⁶³ and a third group who call

⁶⁰This refers to the Khatri-Chetri designation used for the children of Brahmin men and Chetri or Matwali women (Bennett 1983:10).

⁶¹The literature concerning the status of the *Sesya*: is extensive, possibly due to Rosser's (1966) article. Quigley (n.d.) has thoroughly examined this issue, though I differ with some of his arguments (see below), which are largely followed by Allen (n.d. "Hierarchy..."). See also Gellner (1986:139-144) for a somewhat opposed view, in which he outlines his notion of the "Shrestha paradox."

⁶²Though Quigley refers to these intermarrying sub-groups as "lineage groups," not all their members can trace their genealogies to a common ancestor. Among the *cāthare*, for example, all those who call themselves "*Jośī*" cannot possibly trace ancestry back to a common ancestor, nor would they regard all "*Jośis*" as *phukipim* (fellow lineage members, Nw.).

⁶³Though these two names, derived from the Nepali can be loosely interpreted as meaning "six clans" and "five clans", respectively, they in fact include many more lineage groups.

themselves "*Śreṣṭhā*", as do many of the *Pāncathare*. Members of this third group, however, are not considered *Sesya:* by members of either of the former two because of the unclear ancestry of those who call themselves "*Śreṣṭhā*" yet do not belong to any of the *Pāncathare* lineages (Quigley n.d.:7). Rosser (1966) has suggested that upwardly mobile *jyāpus* assume this "*Śreṣṭhā*" status through a series of careful subterfuges which culminate in hypogamous marriage with a *Sesya:* woman. The progeny of this union then assume the *Śreṣṭhā* status of their mother. Those who interpret Rosser's suggestion as indicative of a pervasive social phenomenon conclude that there is unusual flexibility in the Newar caste system which permits individual caste mobility (Cf. Toffin 1984:286, 380-382). Quigley (n.d.) denies that this mobility is possible in his delineation of three "isogamous" groups of *Sesya:*/"*Śreṣṭhā*" sub-groups, as discussed further below.

Whether or not one considers the system to be particularly malleable, it is clear that Newar caste society is extremely elaborate, with numerous levels of division and subdivision to which different individuals attach different levels of significance. Toffin, who lists the *Sesya:* as comprised of two castes,⁶⁴ has noted that the Newar have at least thirty caste groups, not to speak of sub-castes, all within the confines of the Kathmandu valley, as compared to only about twelve distinct *Parbatiyā* castes in the whole of Nepal (1984:221).

The large number of distinct caste groups among the Newar is in part due to the fact that the Newar caste system encompasses two hierarchies, one which is essentially Buddhist, the other essentially Hindu (see Figure II). The religious distinction between the two is clearest at the top of each hierarchy, occupied by

⁶⁴Toffin groups the *Pāncathare* and "divers" (here labelled "*Śreṣṭhā*") together as "*Śreṣṭha* du rang inférieur" (1984:231).

the Buddhist *Vajrācārya* and the Hindu *Rājopādhyāy* (or *Dyā: Bajū*) priests. The further down the hierarchy one goes, the more the distinctions "Hindu" and "Buddhist" become unclear, and the more varied status attribution to particular castes and sub-castes becomes, to the point where the two hierarchies merge at the level of farmer, or *jyāpu*. Many have noted that if one asks a *jyāpu* whether he or she is a follower of Buddha (*Bauddhamargī*) or Shiva (*Śivamargī*), the answer is likely to be "both."

Lists of Newar castes compiled by anthropologists vary quite widely considering the relative propinquity of their subject populations. Nepali (1965:150-164), Gutschow and Kölver (1975:56-58), and Toffin (1984:230-231), have all compiled detailed caste lists which differ both in terms of their contents and their hierarchies. These variations reflect differences in the status of the informants consulted, and the choice of locale studied. They may also reflect differing schematas of sub-categories which distinguish different groups within castes.

When the Newar use the term *jāt*, the closest indigenous term for caste, they may refer to a sub-caste, section, or named descent group. The term *thār* is used with similar ambiguity, though it is seldom used to refer to caste per se.⁶⁵

⁶⁵Toffin states that the Newar use *thār* to mean both a named lineage group and a non-exogamous sub-caste (1984:388). Usage among the *Parbatiyā* varies considerably; among Brahmins the *thār* "is strictly exogamous" (K.B. Bista 1978:38), among the *Chettri*, not necessarily exogamous, though common ancestry is sometimes claimed. In my experience, the Newar most often equate *thār* with the name, roughly equivalent to surname, which they use to refer to themselves. Asking someone about their *thār* is considered more polite than inquiring about one's *jāt*, presumably because the *thār* name permits obfuscation or ambiguity about caste status in some cases (eg. many *jyāpus* will take the name Singh). Bennett finds a similar usage among the *Bāhun/Chettri*, stating that "...*thar*, strictly speaking, is really nothing more than a last name shared by many different descent groups." (1983:18)

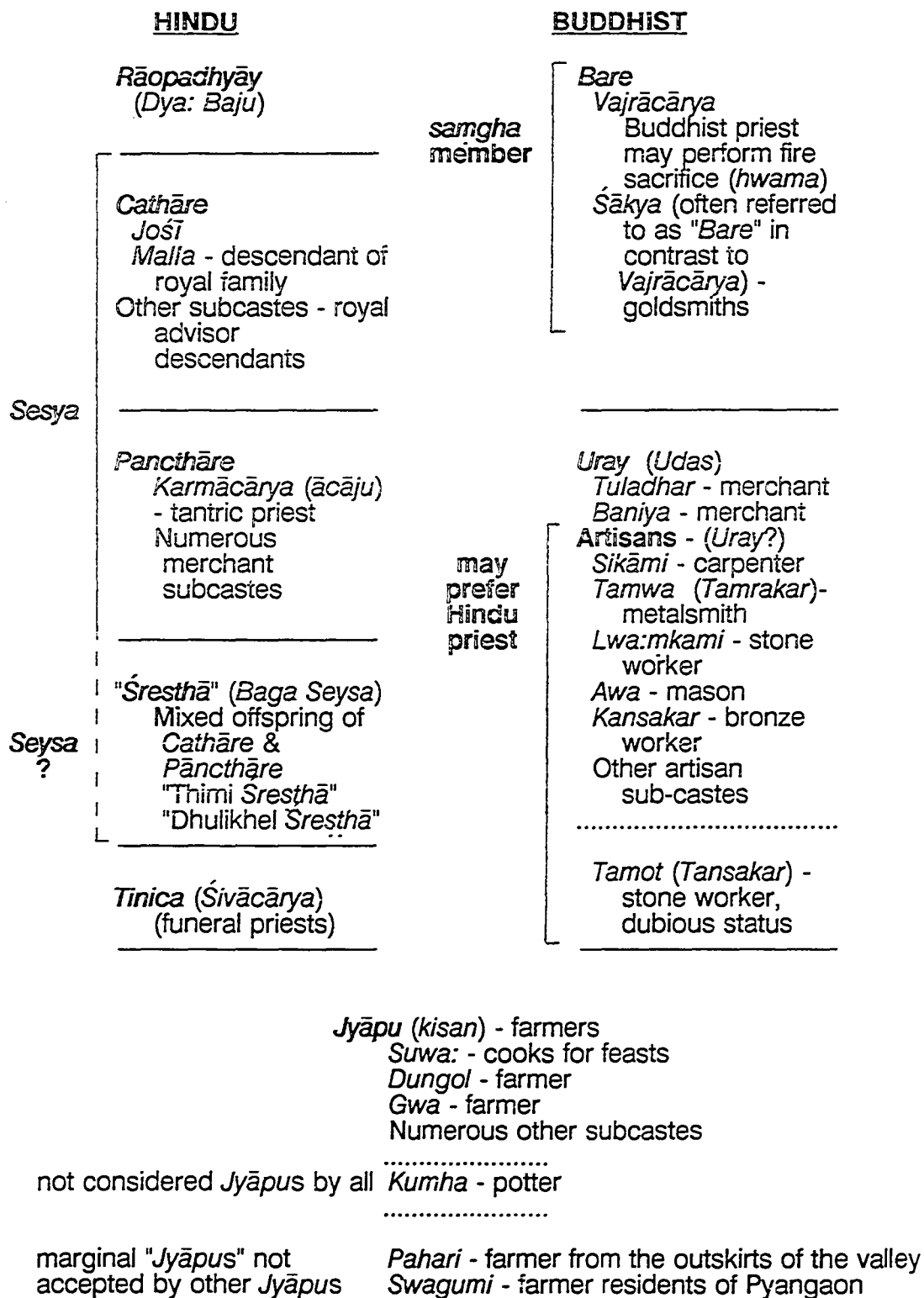


FIGURE IIb

**Newar Caste Hierarchy:
Water Unacceptable Castes (*majyupim*)**

Touchable castes (*thiye jyupim*)

Sangam (Sangat) - Launderers (*Dhobis*)

Bha - Dyers of red cloth, funeral functionaries

Dwim (*Duniya, Putuwar, Rajputwar*) - quarry workers, supply red earth
used for cleansing and coating mud floors

Nay (*Nya*, in Bhaktapur) - butchers, funeral procession musicians

Kusle (*Jogi, Darśandhari*) - musicians

Untouchable castes (*thiye majyupim*)

Kulu - cobblers, drum-makers

Pore - fishers, skinners, traditionally executioners

Cyamkhala (*Cyame, Kucikar*) - night-soil remover

Hara haru - offspring of *Pore/Cyamkhala* marriage

Note: All of the above castes are endogamous. The *Hara haru* are the result of illicit exogamous unions and assume neither the father's nor mother's caste status. The hierarchical order is essentially that suggested by Toffin (1984), though any hierarchy will shift according to which *majyupim*'s perspective is used.

§§§

Symbols Used, Figure II a,b.

————— = boundary of endogamy

[= encloses intermarrying sub-castes

() = alternate appellation

These diagrams are not exhaustive, and represent an approximate consensus with respect to hierarchical order. Data is drawn primarily from Toffin (1984), Nepali (1965), Gutschow (1975), and my own research.

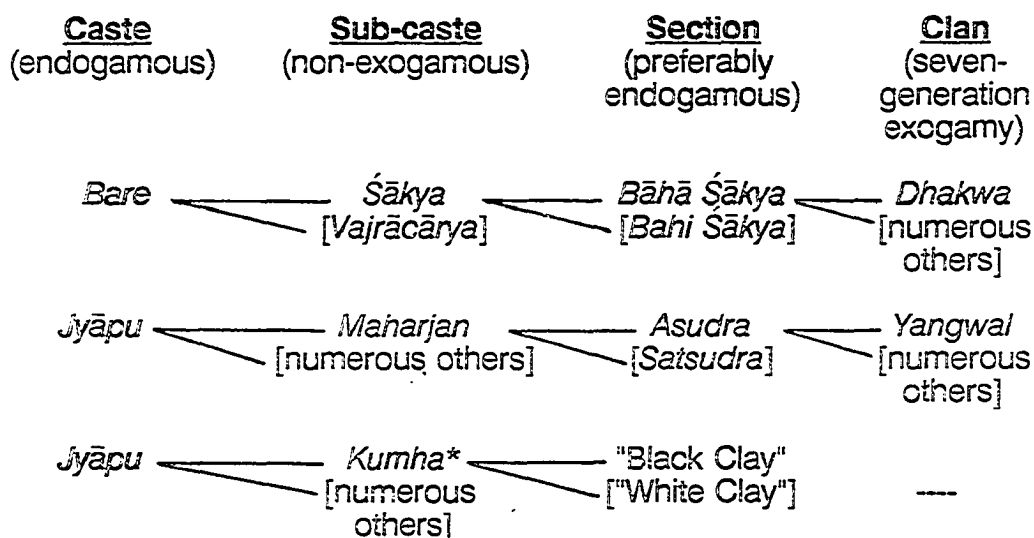
Local Variation in Caste Hierarchies

Anthropologists refer to various levels of organization that may be encompassed within a given caste, including all of the above designations. Not all groups may be categorized at each level, though some may be, as indicated in Figure III. Distinctions may be made in one locale and not in another. The differentiation made in Panga between *Kumha* who work with white clay and those who work with black clay is one example of local variation in categorical hierarchies (Nepali 1965). It is beyond the scope of this work to evolve a terminology which can consistently encompass all categorical schemata reported for the Newar. Figure III is provided to illustrate several possible categorical hierarchies derived from applying the above terms to my own ethnography and that of Gopal Singh Nepali (1965).

Just as there are nearly as many schemas of the system as there are anthropologists who draw them, there are nearly as many Newar opinions concerning caste hierarchy as there are Newars. Status distinctions for ego are generally much finer among ego's immediately adjacent social peers than further up or down the scale, leading to hierarchical differences depending on locale (due to the presence or absence of certain groups) and the status of ego.

The *pāncathare*, for example, will vigorously distinguish between themselves and the "*Śreṣṭhā*" who are not among their lineages. However the *cāthare*, who claim descent from royal functionaries, are more likely to regard the *pancathare* and "*Śreṣṭhā*" as of the same ilk, as they are both of dubious heritage from the *cāthare* perspective. Among the Buddhist castes, the Uray Tuladhars of Kathmandu consider the Uray status claimed by the Bungamati "Tuladhars" to be questionable, for in Bungamati the offspring of a Bare man and a *iyāpuni*

FIGURE III

Newar Caste Subdivisions:
Three Examples

* *Kumha* are not considered *jyāpus* in some localities.

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is dubbed "*Tuladhar*".¹ The Hindu *Sesya*: and Buddhist *Uray* are therefore analogous because they both occupy roughly the same niche in their respective caste hierarchies, and because both are viewed by their superiors as encompassing individuals of uncertain descent. Denigrating comments concerning illegitimate claims to "*Śreṣṭhā*" status are of the same order as the derogatory maxim, "What to say? What to say? *Uray*!"⁶⁶, which implies that nearly anybody can be called an *Uray*.

⁶⁶ *Chu dhāye? Chu dhāye? Urāy!*

The status of castes and sub-castes can vary from one locale to another, relative not only to the other castes and sub-castes within a particular settlement, but relative to groups of the same designation living in different settlements as well. Sub-caste names may be coupled with place names to make these distinctions clear. "Thimi Śreṣṭhā" and "Dhulikhel Śreṣṭhā", for example, are names applied by other Śreṣṭhās to distinguish these groups of questionable (and therefore lower) status "Śreṣṭhās" from themselves. The *jyāpu* of Bhaktapur consider themselves superior to their counterparts in Patan and Kathmandu who eat food prepared by the Buddhist Bare. The Bare enjoy high status among the *jyāpu* of Patan and Kathmandu but lower status among the predominantly Hindu Newar population of Bhaktapur (Nepali 1965: 166-167). The *Kumha* potters intermarry freely with *jyāpus* in Kathmandu, but not in Bhaktapur and Panauti, where *jyāpus* consider the *Kumha* to be their inferiors.⁶⁷

For all the intricacy of their caste system, the Newar maintain a popular tradition that caste was imposed upon them in the thirteenth century by the Hindu reformer King, Jayasthiti Malla.⁶⁸ Though historically unlikely, this belief is consonant with an ethos which both Allen (n.d.) and I note among the Newar. Relationships of reciprocity and cooperation among the Newar cross social

⁶⁷The situation in Patan is not as clear cut, though many *jyāpus* there consider the *Kumaha* to be *baca kwemha*, or a "little bit low".

⁶⁸Though Quigley suggests that this may in fact be the case, most other scholars agree that caste, even among Buddhist Newars, was a part of social reality long before Jayasthiti Malla's reign. Slusser (1982:287) points out that the *Sākya* and *Vajrācārya* were distinguished in twelfth century manuscripts. Amsuvarman's A.D. 605 stele in Bungamati records his concern that its residents pursue their traditional occupations in accordance with their *varnas*, a far earlier indication of caste in Newar society. (c.f. Regmi 1983:vol.3,130). See also Greenwold (1977:94-5) on Newar beliefs concerning the origins of their caste system.

boundaries which are more typically, in other caste societies, imbued with asymmetry and subordination. This pervasiveness of complementary relationships within Newar caste society distinguishes it dramatically from *Bāhun-Chettri* caste society. This contrast is most clearly evident in a comparison of their marriage practices.

Newar Marriage: Alliance versus Asymmetry

The structural significance of the fact that sub-castes freely intermarry within the larger encompassing endogamous castes is profound. Marriage with members of either parents' lineage within seven generations is theoretically proscribed among the Newar.⁶⁹ The establishment of asymmetrical relations between a group of wife-givers and wife-takers is therefore theoretically impossible. The intra-caste hypergamy which so profoundly influences affinal relations, residential patterns, and the status of women among the Bahun Chettri⁷⁰ is essentially absent among

⁶⁹This is a commonly quoted ideal. Quigley states the prohibition as follows: "All members of the lineages of one's parents and grandparents are proscribed. Alternatively put, one may not marry into either one's own lineage, the lineage of one's mother's brother, or of any grandparent's mother's brother (though in practice the final prohibition seems to apply only if that grandparent is still alive)." (1987:164). Toffin (1975:215) states that among the *Citrakār* this prohibition in the matriline extends only five generations; in the patriline, seven. Vergati 1979:120) finds that among the upper castes in Bhaktapur, though a seven generation prohibition is recognized, genealogical research which determines marital eligibility is limited to three generations. Genealogical "amnesia" also plays a significant role in deviation from the seven generation rule.

⁷⁰See Bennett (1983) for a full discussion of *Bāhun/Chettri* marriage. This pattern is pervasive among *Parbāṭiya* groups through the Himalayas and is the dominant pattern in North India as well.

the Newar.⁷¹ In fact, Quigley suggests that in the case of a restricted pool of eligible affines, symmetrical alliances between lineages will inevitably emerge (1987:20). Though it is not at all clear that such conditions prevail (see below), it is apparent that the structural potential for symmetric affinal alliance among the Newar is greater than for systematic affinal asymmetry. This is reflected in their kinship terminology, for as Toffin has pointed out, "Beyond the basic opposition between consanguines and affines, there emerges a system in which alliance plays a predominant role." (1975b:153)⁷²

Prescriptive Marriage Regulation and Territorial Exogamy: Contrary to Quigley's notion that marriage among the Newar is virtually prescriptive, it would appear that, in general, the opposite is the case; potential marital partners are defined only by exclusion, not inclusion, except in that caste endogamy should be honored (Toffin 1984:406). Though his characterization of Newar marriage as isogamous is useful in so far as it acknowledges the agglomeration of various

⁷¹It would be inaccurate to suggest that endogamous, or intra-caste, hypergamy does not exist at all viz. my reference to ranking within each of the *Sākya*, *Sesya* and *Uray* groups. It is not clear how this ranking actually influences marriage patterns, nor to what degree it is shared among those who are theoretically so ranked. The degree to which this dynamic is present, however, is significantly less among the Newar than among the Parbatiya.

⁷²In this article Toffin also points out that terminological usage co-varies with marriage patterns and locale, symmetrical terminology being used more frequently in territorially endogamous villages which disregard the seven-generation rule.

intermarrying sub-castes into endogamous groups, it is a serious error to assert, as he does, that the Newar are territorially isogamous.⁷³

Toffin finds that Panauti is "fundamentally exogamous,"⁷⁴ Eighty-three percent (83%) of all Panauti marriages were with people living outside the village, and of these, 65% were well beyond a half hour's walk away (1984:07), the limits of Quigley's zone of village isogamy.⁷⁵ Pradhan notes that most of the women of Bulu, a largely *jyāpu* village in the South of the valley, "... are exogamously married and come from neighboring villages such as Thecho, Chapagaon, both less than an hour's walk, or Sonaguthi," all of which are approximately four miles away (1982:58). Many of the *Uray* men in Patan marry wives from elsewhere, some even from Panauti. Toffin notes that, in the case of the *Tamrakar*, this is a long-established pattern, as is intermarriage among the *Pore* of Nala and Panauti (ibid.).

⁷³Quigley (n.d. & 1987) makes these assertions on the basis of Nepali's (1965) work in Panga, Toffin's (1977) work in Pyangaon, and his own work in Dhulikhel. Pyangaon is unusual in that other Newar *jyāpus* do not recognize its *jyāpu* residents as their equals; certainly this anomaly enforces an unusual degree of village endogamy. Dhulikhel is also unusual due to its geographically peripheral status and the presence of numerous "*Śresthās*" of dubious heritage in its population, both factors which would logically promote village endogamy.

Quigley's argument for territorial isogamy is also logically inconsistent. On the one hand, he disputes Rosser's scenario for individual caste mobility by stating that "...since the Kathmandu valley is only about 20 miles in diameter, [a] marriage broker should not have too much difficulty in ascertaining the origins of a Valley resident." (n.d.:11), yet he claims that village isogamy is necessary for the "...recognition of a circle of acceptable affines." (ibid.:20)

⁷⁴The close relationship which persists between the Newar bride and her natal home makes territorial exogamy preferable, in one sense, for the groom and his family. A Newari saying articulates this consideration, stating "The further away the daughter-in-law's natal home (*tha:chem*) is, the better, for she will go there less."

⁷⁵It should be noted that a significant number of villages may be reached within a half-hour walk from any given point in the valley, for its entire width can be walked in a day.

I also found village exogamy among the *Vajrācārya* of Bungamati, including marriages with Kirtipur residents, and considerable exogamy among the Patan *Śākyas*, who marry Kathmandu and Bungamati *Śākyas*.⁷⁶

These village-exogamous marriages establish ties between residents of the many Newar settlements in the valley. These ties are coupled with highly dispersed land ownership; Bungamati residents own land in Kirtipur and Cobar, for example. Though it is true that an individual's social identity is very much tied to their place of birth (as well as virilocal residence, in the case of women), this does not generally lead to territorial isolationism in the senses that Quigley proposes. Some villages do discourage outsiders from attending particular local festivals (notably *Triśulyātrā* in Deo Patan)⁷⁷ as Quigley suggests, though the opposite is at least as often the case.

Festivals are an important point of local distinction and source of local pride, and are often compared in terms of the numbers of outsiders they attract. The river bathing of Cobahadya at Cobar, Patan's *Samyek*, and Bhaktapur's *Gāi Jātrā* (*Sā Pāru*, Nw.) all attract and welcome Newars from all over the valley. The sacred geography of the Kathmandu valley inspires numerous cyclic pilgrimages which

⁷⁶Though there is a greater likelihood of marriages occurring between those who live in relative proximity, as noted by Nepali (1965:207), this is more likely for the sake of convenience for the bride who retains strong ties to her natal home than due to territorial isolationism. The large number of elopements among the lower castes would also be more likely to occur between neighbors than distant strangers. It is true, however, that some castes from one locality may be considered inferior to their namesakes in another, and are thus avoided as marriage partners (see Vergati 1979:118).

⁷⁷See Michaels (1986:10) for the legends which explain why obscenities are hurled at Kathmandu residents during this festival.

link valley towns in yet another fashion.⁷⁸ Village exogamy is, therefore, just one of many kinds of inter-village ties which serve to link many discrete and distinctive Newar communities into a greater one.⁷⁹

Affinal Relations and the Status of Women

As noted above, relations between affines are dramatically different among the *Bāhun-Chettri* and the Newar. Affinal relations among the Newar vary with caste and locale, in some cases more nearly approaching the *Bāhun-Chettri* model than others. There are, however, fundamental structural and ideological differences which distinguish the *Bāhun-Chettri* from the Newar in this regard. This distinction is commonly attributed to two interrelated factors. Newar girls⁸⁰ undergo a ritual marriage, called *ihī yayegu*, in which they marry a fruit which they consider to be symbolic of either Vishnu or a Boddhicitta, depending upon whether the girl is Hindu or Buddhist (Vergati 1982:278).⁸¹ Because of this primary marriage, the girl

⁷⁸See Allen (1987), Lewis (1984:54-68), and Gutschow (1987) concerning traditional pilgrimage routes in the valley.

⁷⁹This does not contradict what was stated earlier (p.63) concerning feuding between the three kingdoms prior to the invasion by the Gorkhalis which pertained to political identity. Quigley (1987:163) has suggested that these conflicts probably not involve the populace at large, but were limited to court intrigue. See also above concerning popular unity at the time of the invasion.

I do not dispute that a preponderance of marriages in the major towns of the valley probably occur endogamously, as suggested by Nepali (1965:207). This, however, is not due to the kind of territorial isogamy that Quigley suggests, and is more likely due to the advantages of marrying a daughter to someone nearby than inter-locality variation in sub-caste status. Large-scale studies are needed to satisfactorily resolve this latter issue.

⁸⁰Not all castes participate in this rite; unclean castes and the *Rājopadhyāy* do not perform *ihī pujā*, nor do some *gyāpus*.

⁸¹For a full description of *ihī pujā*, see Vergati (1978), Lewis (1984:271-276), and Toffin (1984:401-405). Vergati (1979:126) states that in Bhaktapur all her informants insisted that the bel fruit represents Lord Shiva, though no one else has reported this interpretation.

is said to be immune to the consequences of mortal widowhood because of her immortal first spouse. Remarriage is thus theoretically relatively easy, as is divorce.

The ease of remarriage and divorce among the Newar is a highly contentious issue. *Jyāpu* women are able to dissolve marriages and remarry quite easily; divorce can be accomplished almost by default.⁸² This does not seem to be the case among some of the higher castes, where dissolution of marital ties is strongly discouraged and widow remarriage rare (Lewis 1984:296-7). It should be noted, however, that the *jyāpu* do comprise nearly half of the Newar population (Allen 1973:5), and are widely considered to be the primary perpetuators of Newar tradition; their example is not to be dismissed as deviant. It should also be noted that though remarriage may not be pervasive among all Newar castes, in no case does it necessarily entail a loss of caste status for the bride or compromise the status of her children, as it does among the *Bāhun-Chettri* (Bennett 1983:12).

Of more significance with respect to the issue of affinal alliance and asymmetry is the fact that upon the conclusion of the *ihi pujā*, the Newar girl is initiated into her father's lineage.⁸³ She will retain important responsibilities to this lineage even after shifting her lineage membership to that of her husband after

⁸²Gopal Singh Nepali, in the first major ethnography on the Newar, reported that a Newar woman had only to place two betel nuts on her spouse's pillow in order to divorce him, though he added that this practice was on the wane since it was first reported in 1908, and was presently confined to the *Manandhar* and *Uray* (1965:239). Pradhan also alludes to this practice, though notes that it is no longer pursued because husbands no longer present their brides with betel nuts during their wedding ceremony (1982:68).

⁸³Among the *Bāhun/Chettri* a girl is not considered a member of any *gotra* until she joins that of her husband. *Gotras* among the *Bāhun/Chettri* are strictly exogamous, whereas among the Newar, *gotra* membership is relevant only for astrological calculation, and marriages do occur within *gotras*.

marriage, and will be invited to many of the celebrations of life cycle rites and festivals held at her father's home.⁸⁴

The ongoing relationship between a wife and her paternal home among the Newar differs significantly from the *Bāhun-Chettri* wife's relations with her natal household.. Though the *Bāhun-Chettri* woman cherishes her *māiti ghar*, it does not provide the same support as the Newarni's *tha:chem*. The prestige of the *Bāhun-Chettri* family depends on the acceptance of their daughter in hypergamous wedlock; a bride will tolerate considerable abuse rather than bring dishonor and shame upon her family by abandoning her spouse and in-laws.⁸⁵

Many observers have noted much the opposite among the Newar. Pradhan states of the Newar wife that:

...the support she receives from her *thaache*, moral, financial or otherwise is quite remarkable. For a Newar woman her last resort and refuge in time of distress or ill-treatment from her affinal family or desertion by her husband is invariably her *thaache*. (1982:58)

⁸⁴Nepali and Vergati report that the wife also participates in her paternal lineage deity worship for the first year after marriage (Nepali 1965:233, Vergati 1979:126) though Pradhan (1982:57) contradicts this. Bennett (1982) emphasizes the "sacred" status of the married Bahun/Chettri daughter/sister in her natal home and her importance in certain rituals. The Bahun/Chettri wife does not participate in her father's funeral, however, as does her Newar counterpart. Toffin (1984:491) states that a married daughter may come to their paternal home to perform the daily worship of her paternal lineage deity if the members of the household are in mourning and therefore unable to perform this ritual themselves.

⁸⁵The extreme abuse of young wives reported in North India, culminating in wife burning in some cases when dowry is deemed insufficient, is unknown among the Parbatiya of Nepal to my knowledge. Bennett also points out that a bride's consanguineal kin, especially her brothers, will intervene in extreme cases of domestic problems out of affection for their sister. The *māiti* of the Bahun/Chettri bride, however, is not as readily accessible as a retreat as it is for the Newar bride (Bennett 1983:251-252).

The Newar woman does not only seek support from her natal family under duress, however. It is generally reported that a new wife may spend a considerable amount of time in her *tha:chem*, in some cases virtually living there prior to giving birth to her first child (Toffin 1984:110-111, Lewis 1984:296). Though the frequency of these visits generally decreases after a wife becomes a mother, many Newar mothers continue to visit their natal home frequently.

The tensions of living with in-laws are often obviated among the Newar by neolocal residence. The option to return to her *tha:chem* places the Newar bride in a relatively good bargaining position to convince her husband to establish a residence separate from his parent's household (Pradhan 1982:15,54). Most households in the Newar villages of Bulu, Panauti, Pyangaon, and Bungamati consist only of nuclear families (Pradhan 1982, Toffin 1983, Neilsen 1972) and eligibility for full *guthi* membership is often contingent upon having established an independent household (Toffin 1984:197). Neolocal residence is both a Newar norm and ideal, particularly among village-dwelling Newar.⁸⁶ This is in marked contrast to the *Bāhun-Chetri*, among whom household division occurs less frequently and in opposition to the ideal of the extended family household (Bennett 1983:22).

Toffin describes two cases of matrilocal residence in Panauti, which, though entered into by dire necessity with considerable loss of status for the groom, would be unthinkable in *Bāhun-Chetri* society (Ibid.). Nepali notes the same institution,

⁸⁶But see Lewis (1984:165) with respect to the urban Tuladhar. Nepali (1965:257) notes that nuclear and joint families are roughly equal in number in both Kathmandu and Panga.

which he refers to as *ghar jawain*⁸⁷, and implies that it was once more widespread than he found it to be in the early 1960's, suggesting that the practice existed even among the Mallas (1965:235-6).

Most report that dowry, a potential source of tension among affines, is less emphasized among the Newar than among the *Bāhun-Chettri*. Though prosperous families may choose to enhance their prestige by offering conspicuously large dowries, the marriage of a daughter does not seem to compel Newars of modest means to overextend themselves to the degree that is common among the Bahun-Chettri. Pradhan (1982:63) notes that the question of dowry among *jyāpus* is often obviated entirely by elopement, a strategy also noted twenty years before by Nepali (1965:231) and which is generally accepted in Bungamati. The dowry presented in Bungamati is typically quite modest and remains the property of the wife even if she should leave her husband (Neilsen 1974:116). Any property owned by a woman, whether acquired by inheritance or dowry, is passed directly on to her natural children and not to her husband.

Though marriages are usually arranged by the parents of the bride and groom if they have the means to provide the gifts and feasts entailed in a wedding, the intended often know one another and have agreed to the match. Visiting

⁸⁷Toffin gives the Newari terms *dolaji* and *chemjica* as well as the Nepali term *ghar jawain*. Manandhar also defines *dvalaji* as "one who lives with his wife's kin" (1986:117).

among in-laws goes in both directions, a husband often accompanying his wife to her *tha:chem* on ritual and festive occasions.⁸⁸

Marriage among the Newar entails a complementary relationship involving reciprocal obligations among affines more than a contract entailing the asymmetrical obligation of wife and wife-givers to husband and husband's family. The status of the woman in Newar society, though it varies from caste to caste, is not systematically diminished by the structural demands of hypergamy,⁸⁹ but is usually enhanced by the extensive support offered by her natal household. Most Newar women occupy a position of markedly greater independence and power than their *Parbatiyā* counterparts.

The status of Newar women is revealed in their important symbolic and active roles in ritual as well as in the socio-politics of marriage. It is impossible to fully understand their status in any one of these realms without considering the others, for there is no real distinction between social interaction and "religious" or "ritual" activity. Social status is ineluctably associated with ritual obligation and responsibility; they are interdependent aspects of social identity at all levels, from the individual to the caste group. This interdependency is most clearly revealed in the Newar *guthī*.

⁸⁸Toffin's observations in Pyangaon (1984:113) confirm my own in Patan and Bungamati. However, he notes that these visits in Panauti are extremely formal and involve clear indications of the inferiority of the groom's in-law hosts with respect to the groom. He also notes that these formalities are far less strict among the lower castes (1984:18). I noted no such behavior in either Patan nor Bungamati among the *Bare*, *Uray*, *iyāpu*, nor unclean castes, but found relationships to be relatively symmetrical among in-laws. I had limited exposure to comparable upper-caste Hindu situations.

⁸⁹The fact that exchange marriage has existed among the Newar is striking evidence of this principal of alliance exercised in its most extreme form (Nepali 1965:215-6).

The Newar Guthi

Guthi membership is an important component of Newar social identity; on the same order as caste and lineage membership. *Guthis* serve to establish and perpetuate religious and benevolent institutions. *Guthi* affiliation may be based on many different criteria and is voluntary in that it may be relinquished. Some *guthis* admit only those of a particular lineage or caste. Membership in some *guthis* may be inherited or, in the case of a woman, acquired by marriage into a patriline. Maintaining ones *guthi* affiliation requires active participation and adherence to standards of behavior; membership can be lost through neglect or abuse, as well as by choice.

Just as Newar caste and marriage customs encompass considerable diversity and are yet distinctively Newar, so too do Newar *guthis* include a tremendous variety of social institutions which are also, in sum, distinctively Newar.⁹⁰ Toffin has stated that "...les *guthi* constituent en fait un mode original d'organisation sociale qui différencié nettement les Néwar des autres populations népalaises" (1984:174). Though non-Newars also have *guthis*, Regmi makes the distinction that "...for non-Newars *guthi* is simply a system used to finance religious and charitable institutions..." which has "...no organic connection with [their] way of life." But "...for the Newars, on the other hand, the [*guthi*] system is an organic part of their social and cultural life." (Regmi 1968:vol.4, 2)

Guthis vary with respect to their purpose, membership criteria, size, and wealth. They organize and carry out most of the tasks involved in celebrating the

⁹⁰Toffin confirms my own observations when he states "Lorsqu'on examine le système du *guthi* chez les Néwar, une des premières choses qui frappe l'observateur est l'absence d'homogénéité, la diversité extrême des *guthi*." (1975:207)

numerous Newar religious festivals. There is a popular saying in Nepal that there are more gods than people and more temples than houses. *Guthīs* have been established for the maintenance of most of these temples as well as the perpetuation of rituals required by the gods within.

Guthīs devoted to major gods and temples may involve hundreds of individuals and possess considerable property. At the opposite end of the scale, some *guthīs* only have two or three members, and may have as their sole *raison d'être* something as simple as lighting an oil lamp once a year in front of a god.⁹¹ *Guthīs* often have more than one function and may assist unfortunate members or outsiders who are in financial need, function as credit unions, or initiate and maintain public works projects, such as irrigation canals and rest-houses (Pradhan 1982:31).

In spite of their diversity, all Newar *guthīs* share several essential characteristics. All *guthīs* allocate financial resources, which, at the very least, include money collected from their members to defray the cost of *guthī* activities. *Guthīs* may own property or maintain bank accounts from which they derive tax-exempt income. They may also possess property in the form of images, ritual paraphernalia, and even buildings.

Guthī members confer authority among themselves on a seniority basis, the eldest (*thakālī*) sharing his⁹² authority with as many as seven others who rank

⁹¹There are many of these *guthīs* associated with the *jātrā* of Bungadya, who, as *Avalokiteśvara*, is associated in legend with the flame of a lamp. This kind of *guthī* is among the earliest described in the history of Nepal, there being a *pradīpagosthi* (lamp *guthī*, Skrt.) mentioned in a seventh century inscription in Lele (Toffin 1984:177).

⁹²Though women often participate in *guthī* activities and enjoy many of the benefits to which male *guthīyars* are entitled, their status is linked to that of their
(continued...)

immediately beneath him in age and status.⁹³ Members thus ultimately share authority equitably, each eventually assuming the role of *thakālī* in turn (given that he survives his predecessors). The senior members make all decisions concerning *guthī* policy, including assessing fines against those who have shirked responsibilities or excommunicating those who have committed more egregious offenses. Members share responsibilities on a cyclical basis in order of seniority. Each member assumes responsibilities in turn (*palampā*). In larger *guthīs*, a *guthīyar* may have to fulfill certain obligations, such as attending a deity or providing a feast, only a few times during his or her life, whereas smaller *guthīs* tend to require the services of a given member more frequently. Some *guthī* responsibilities may require the presence of several or even all *guthīyars*. The unit of *guthī* membership is often the hearth-sharing family, thus family members may also rotate responsibilities among themselves. Though there are many different strategies employed to equitably share responsibility within the *guthī*, they all seem to involve age-seniority as their basic organizing principle.

⁹²(...continued)

husband (or father, if unmarried) and most *guthīs* do not include women among their elders who govern the *guthī*. The wives of these elders, however, enjoy special status which may even persist after their husband's demise. Some *guthīs* have been formed by women which include mostly women, though the only examples I know of this involve annual collective offerings to various gods.

⁹³These eight are named consecutively, the second being called *noko*, the third *swoko*, and so on through *cyāko* (the eighth). Toffin (1975) and others state that the term *nāya* is interchangeable with *thakālī*, though those whom I have heard use the term *nāya* use it synonymously with *nāya:kim*, or foreman. Though these two positions may be occupied by the same individual, among the *Urāy* and *jyāpu* who build the *rath*, a younger man assumes the role of *nāya*: (*nāya:kim*), but the *thakālī* exercises his authority and privilege in feasts and rituals.

Finally, all *guthīs* celebrate at least one annual feast if they can afford it. Many devote a considerable portion of their assets to their annual feast, and any *guthī* which cannot support a feast is probably on the verge of extinction. It is not unusual for *guthī* members to incur considerable debts in the course of providing the annual feast if the *guthī* funds are insufficient for that purpose.

Most Newars must belong to at least two *guthīs* in order to be full members of society, a *sī guthī* (or *sanaguthī*) which assumes funereal responsibilities for its members,⁹⁴ and a *digu dyā: guthī*, or lineage association centered on devotion to a clan deity.⁹⁵

The Death *guthī*

The Newar *guthī* which has received the most attention from scholars is the *sī guthī* (literally, "death association"), or *sana guthī*, which is its rough equivalent.⁹⁶ Though the precise functions of death *guthīs* vary from caste to

⁹⁴Though it seems that traditionally all Newar belonged to a funeral *guthī*, Ishii (1987:1) suggests that there may be a trend in urban areas to reduce reliance on *sī* or *sana guthīs*. Ishii's conclusions seem to be based largely on Lewis' (1984:175) observation that some *Tuladhars*, as a result of intrafamilial conflict, have withdrawn from *sī guthīs* in recent years, employing those needed for funerary rites.

⁹⁵Though the ethnographic literature and my own observations suggest that all lineages are organized in a *guthī*-like fashion in order to worship their lineage deities, some apparently do not refer to this lineage-level organization as a *guthī* per se. Lewis (1984:173) and Vergati (1979:122) report the use of the term *guthī* associated with *digu dyā:s* only with reference to organizations which involve several lineages which share the same *digu dyā:* or *digu khyā:* (place where clan deities are located). Toffin (1984:179), Nepali (1965:192), and Quigley (n.d.:16) all refer to *digu dyā: guthīs* (or, alternatively *deo*, *fukee*, or *dewali guthīs*) as universal features of Newar society.

⁹⁶See Ishii (1987) for a nearly complete summary of the literature on *sī* and *sana guthīs*. He finds that, in general, *sana guthīs* do not actually attend to the cremation of the deceased (as do the *sī guthīs*), but function more as a source of emotional support for the bereaved.

caste, locale to locale, they essentially provide the ritual materials needed for the procession and cremation of the body, provide moral support (and sometimes food) for the bereaved family, participate in the funeral procession, and in many cases, attend to the actual cremation once the pyre is lit.

Rosser (1978), Quigley (n.d.), and others have paid particular attention to this *guthī* because they regard membership in an appropriate *sī guthī* as the primary basis for determining the legitimacy of an individual's claimed caste status and, therefore, his or her suitability as a marriage partner. The *sī guthī* is typically the locus of authority concerning caste membership.⁹⁷ One who has transgressed caste mores may be expelled from one's *sī guthī*, tantamount in most cases to losing one's caste status.

One may shift to a *sī guthī* other than that of one's father if one moves, or as a consequence of intra-*guthī* conflict,⁹⁸ provided that the members of the new *sī guthī* approve (Toffin 1984:387). The main criterion for the approving a new member is their caste status. *Guthī* elders may consult with the applicant's former *sī guthī* members in order to be certain of their status. Once accepted, the new member will usually be required to pay an entrance fee. Rosser (1978) has suggested that acceptance into a higher caste *sī guthī* is the most critical phase of an individual's upward caste mobility, and that paying an inflated entrance fee

⁹⁷The *desia guthīs* of the Chitrakar constitute an exception to this general rule (Toffin 1975b:218).

⁹⁸See Ishii 1978, 1980a, and 1987) for detailed accounts of *guthī* disintegration and reformation in response to various social and economic pressures.

is typically involved in this process. Others have described this form of individual caste mobility as extremely improbable.⁹⁹

The association of *sī guthīs* with caste status is not the only reason for their importance, for the Newar are particularly concerned about the fate of their dead. The extraordinary devotion of both Hindu and Buddhist Newars to Hyemraj¹⁰⁰ in the form of Cakwadya (Minnath) of Patan and Janmadya (Seto Matsyendranath) of Kathmandu, is one indication of this concern. A series of rituals must be correctly performed in order to expedite the transit of the deceased from the world of the living to the hereafter. Any interruption of this process results in the condemnation of the deceased to existence among the living as a perpetually hungry *preta* who will trouble his or her survivors. The *sī* and *sana guthīs* insure that the emotionally troubled family members need neither be burdened nor entrusted with the difficult and vital tasks to be performed upon the death of a kinsman, an arrangement which is beneficial to both the bereaved and the other members of the community.¹⁰¹ Membership in a *sī guthī* provides an individual with a means of gaining the expertise necessary to perform the tasks with which

⁹⁹Quigley (n.d. and 1987) suggests that admission of an individual of unknown status into a *sī guthī* is virtually impossible, and that the admittance of a caste inferior is even less likely. Ishii's (1987, table 1) review of the literature indicates that Quigley is the only one of seven anthropologists who worked in eight different Newar communities to report the absolute exclusion of outsiders from *sī guthīs*. His position may be an artifact of the unusual status of Dhulikhel *Śreṣṭhās*, upon whose practices his conclusions seem to be based. Toffin (1984:387) reports that seven *sī guthīs* in Panauti are comprised of both *Cathare* and "*Śreṣṭhā*" members, a fact which he considers to be indicative of an on-going process of upward mobility similar to that proposed by Rosser.

¹⁰⁰King of the realm of the dead, thought to aid passage of the deceased from the world of the living (*Yamarāj*, Skrt.).

¹⁰¹See Lewis (1984:307-326) and Toffin (1975 and 1985) for further details concerning Newar rituals and beliefs associated with death.

he is entrusted, just as it ensures that equally expert individuals will attend to his needs and the needs of his family upon his demise.

Toffin reports that some *sī guthī*s have mixed caste membership (1984:387), though this is exceptional. A *sī guthī* may include members of several different lineages (*phukī*) and is not, therefore, necessarily exogamous. A *sī guthī* may also include members from several communities (Ishii 1987:2) if caste-fellows are not sufficiently numerous to constitute a viable local *guthī*. Thus the *sī* or *sanaguthī* is a fundamental Newar social organization which may cross-cut lineage, locality, and even caste divisions, though the latter is quite rare.¹⁰²

The *Digu dyā: guthī*

The other *guthī* to which every Newar must belong is the *digu dyā: guthī*, an association of lineage members devoted to the common worship of their clan deity.¹⁰³ Many lineages recognize a particular aniconic representation of a god, usually an unadorned row of stones located in a field, as their clan deity.¹⁰⁴ Though lineages of the same clan generally share the same aniconic image as their *digu dyā:*, each lineage often has its own *kikimpā*, a crown-like ornament, which is stored either in the home of the eldest member of the *digu dyā: guthī* or by turn in the various members' homes. This ornament is a metonymic representation of the *digu dyā:* and is worshipped daily. Lineage members bring

¹⁰²In the case which Toffin (1984:387) describes, it may be that the two castes involved are in the process of collapsing into one, thus their *guthīs* are multi-caste from the perspective of origin, but perhaps not from the perspective of current behavior.

¹⁰³Though note qualification mentioned above.

¹⁰⁴Toffin (1984) reports that these stones may be replaced at will without any special ritual. Nepali (1965:196) notes the use of the term *lhon digu* to distinguish these stone *digu dyā:s* from their iconic metal (*lhum digu*) forms.

the *kikimpā* to the aniconic *digu dyā:* for their annual *digu dyā: puḷā*. The identity of the god represented by these stones is often kept a closely guarded secret.¹⁰⁵

Those who do not recognize an aniconic representation of their clan deity (as well as many of those who do) typically worship an iconic image kept hidden in a special sanctum (*āgam*) as their clan god. For the Bare, this *āgam* is usually located in their *bāhā* or *bahī*. For others it may be located in a separate building called an *āgam chem* or kept in the oldest house of the clan, or *kul chem* (clan house). Access to the *āgam* is open only to those who have taken an initiation, or *dekhā*. Women are usually required to have borne a child prior to receiving initiation and being admitted to their husband's *āgam*. It is mostly the higher castes who have *āgam dyā:s*, though some lower castes may also have *āgam dyā:s*, especially those who perform services to gods which require initiation.¹⁰⁶

Bare *āgam dyā:s* are typically *śakti dyā:s*, or images which are depicted engaged in sexual intercourse such as Hercakrasamvara or Jogambara. Buddhists may have a *Śiva liṅgam* for an *āgam dyā:*, and Hindus may have what are conventionally regarded as "Buddhist" deities for their *āgam dyā:* (Stahl 1979). Stahl reports that those who worship both an *āgam dyā:* and *digu dyā:* view them as different forms of the same deity. This is, however, difficult to reconcile with the

¹⁰⁵Though Toffin (1984) finds that those who worship aniconic stone *digu dyā:s* guard the *digu dyā:*'s identity as secret, other who publicly worship iconic images as their *digu dyā:* obviously cannot. The *Bārāhī*, for example, worship Purnacandi in Patan as their *digu dyā:*.

¹⁰⁶Stahl (1979) notes that the *Citrakar* and *Prajapati* of Bhaktapur have *agam dyā:s* for this reason, as do the *Niyekhu* who paint the image of Bungadya.

fact that many tend to be secretive about the identity of their *digu dyā*: yet freely reveal the identity of their *āgam dyā*:.¹⁰⁷

Observances for aniconic *digu dyā*:s typically involve sacrifice, though some who prefer to avoid killing an animal may offer a duck egg as a substitute for the more usual duck or chicken. Sacrifice is reported to also be offered in the *āgam* by those lineages which honor their clan deity within its sanctum.¹⁰⁸ After the *pujā*, conducted by either a priest or the eldest *phukī* member, is complete, the *phukīpim* (lineage members) share a feast.

Membership in a *phukī* entails not only agnatic kinship, but the annual¹⁰⁹ reaffirmation of *phukī* membership through worshipping the same clan deity with fellow *phukīpim* as members of one *digu dyā*: *guthī*. Though one may not shift from one *digu dyā*: *guthī* to another, nor belong to more than one at the same time, one may establish a separate *guthī* to honor the same clan deity. This usually happens in response to intra-lineage disputes¹¹⁰ or an increase in *phukī* membership to an unmanageable size.

These splits create *baphukī*, those with whom prior agnatic kinship is recognized, but who, in some cases, may be sufficiently distant to permit intermarriage between *baphukīpim* (Nepali 1965:196). Each split in the *phukī*

¹⁰⁷It is not unusual for Newars to be reticent about revealing the identity of their *āgam dyā*: either, particularly in response to questions about the identity of *āgam dyā*s housed in their own homes.

¹⁰⁸My informants confirm Toffin's report to this effect (1984:559).

¹⁰⁹*Digu pujās* may occur more frequently among some groups. Most *phukis* honor their *digu dyā*: in a major *pujā* between *Aksyatrītyā* and *Sithinakha*:.

¹¹⁰These disputes may concern the eligibility of a member's new wife or her children by a former marriage (*thyākāmacā*) for *guthī* membership. Pradhan (1982) notes several cases in which the *thyākāmacā* were admitted in Bulu, though these were in contravention of customary practice.

requires the manufacture of a new *kikimpā* and/or whatever image may have been kept by the *phukī thakāli*. The *āgaṃ dyā:*, however, is not replicated in this manner, and must stay in the *kul chem* or *āgaṃ chem* (Toffin 1984:558). The new *baphukī* then becomes the basis for the formation of a new *digu dyā: guthī*.¹¹¹

The Guthī and the State

The principal source of funds for temples and festivals in Nepal is the produce of land endowed under the provisions of *guthī* land tenure.¹¹² All land in Nepal is ultimately the property of the King; usufruct tantamount to ownership may be granted, but it is retained at the pleasure of His Majesty's government. *Guthī* lands are dedicated in perpetuity to the preservation of property and/or practice. In recognizing the legitimacy of a donation of land to a *guthī*, the state theoretically renounces its right of ownership in that it may not transfer ownership nor re-direct the fruit of the land from its intended beneficiary through taxation or any other means. This applies both to private *guthīs*, such as the *sī guthī* and the *digu dyā: guthī*, as well as the public, or *Rāj guthīs*. *Guthī* lands administered by the state, whether originally donated by royalty or by subjects who have been granted previously unused land for the purpose of establishing a *guthī* endowment, are known as *Rājguthī* lands.¹¹³

¹¹¹This is the same process discussed earlier with reference to *bāhās* and *saṃgha* membership among the *Bare*.

¹¹²Regmi (1965,v.4:14) goes so far as to say that every temple in Nepal has *guthī* land endowments. This summary of the history of *guthī* land tenure is based primarily on the work of M. C. Regmi (1968).

¹¹³The precise meaning of *Rājguthī* (*guthīs* of the King) has shifted through time, embracing whole categories of what were once other forms of land tenure, such as *Birta guthīs*. Lands "donated" by royalty may, in some cases, simply been confiscated and reallocated to the *Rājguthī* status. There are approximately 5,000 acres (17,968 ropanis) of *rāj guthī* land in Kathmandu district (Regmi 1968, 4:118).

Though *guthī* land tenure was established to ensure the inalienability of the rights of the *guthī* to the produce of the lands donated to it, the rights of eminent domain have been exercised by the government in instances of national emergency as well as for the sake of convenience. The first major confiscation of *guthī* lands recorded in Nepalese history occurred after the conquest of the Kathmandu valley, when the legitimacy of all *guthī* endowments was "reviewed" by Prithvinyan Shah, who "...abolished those that were to be abolished and confirmed those that were to be confirmed." (Regmi 1968:v.4,66) The Shah dynasty placed considerable amounts of land under *guthī* tenure, possibly in order to accumulate merit in the eyes of gods as well as their subjects. Impending war with British India prompted the government in 1806 to again confiscate extensive *guthī* holdings in order to finance their preparations for battle (ibid.). The Ranas also confiscated extensive *guthī* holdings in order to construct numerous palaces for themselves, often providing minimal, if any, compensation to the landholders (Locke n.d., Toffin 1977). More recently, in 1961, the Land Acquisition Act legislated that the government may confiscate *guthī* lands without compensation for the purpose of national welfare.

In addition to these dramatic violations of the spirit of *guthī* land tenure, the government has from the beginning of this century increasingly involved itself in the process of collecting and allocating the funds derived from *Rāj guthī* lands. Traditionally, *guthī* lands were cultivated by tenant farmers who retained only half of their crops, yielding the rest to those responsible for fulfilling *guthī* obligations.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴Though many different kinds of land tenure exist in Nepal, the actual cultivator, if he has not been granted rights of ownership, is usually a tenant who sharecrops at this rate of fifty percent or more. For a complete account of the historical evolution and description of various forms of Nepalese land tenure, see M.C. Regmi's four volume work on the subject (1968).

One government policy which has had dramatic consequences for the institutions which *guthīs* were intended to preserve was the establishment of favorable rates of commutation permitting payment in cash as well as kind by the cultivator. Through a failure to maintain this rate of commutation at market rates, the real earnings of *guthīs* have decreased markedly in the face of inflation.¹¹⁵

Prior to 1852, *guthīyars* were responsible for the collection of revenues and fulfilling *guthī* obligations and were entitled to retain any surplus left over. Jang Bahadur Rana relieved *Rājguthīyars* of most of their responsibilities and prerogatives by contracting out the administrative and financial responsibilities to others. Seventy years later, these contractors were eliminated along with the *Rājguthīyars* and the government assumed control of the *rāj guthīs* directly, appropriating whatever surplus they might generate for the general government expenditure. In 1964, the *Guthī Corporation Act* placed all *Rājguthīs* under an autonomous corporation which administers these holdings and is responsible for the fulfillment of the obligations stipulated in the original *guthī* charters. The corporation also controls the allocation of any *guthī* surplus and is answerable only to the palace.

A branch of this corporation oversees the production of the annual *rath jatra* of Bungadya. Though hundreds of *guthīs* are involved in this *jātrā*, much of the land which was at one time under the direct control of the *guthīyars* is now administered by the *Guthī Samsthan* (Corporation). It is the *Guthī Samsthan* which compensates workers, provides materials, sacrificial animals, feast food, and

¹¹⁵Regmi (1968 v.4) points out that as a result of this increased profitability, many cultivators were able to sublet to other tenants the land to which they had tenancy rights, profiting from the difference between the cash value of the crop and the much lower rate of compensation which he was obligated to pay.

transportation, and coordinates the activities of most of the *guthī*s who contribute their efforts. Most major festivals in the valley are now administered in this fashion.

The centralized administration of *guthī* lands has been evolving for over a century. During this period, *guthī* land holdings have been diminished by numerous forces, and no new *Rājguthī* land grants have been made since 1953. Among the forces which have eroded *guthī* assets, along with inflation and confiscation, is land reform, which has established the rights of tenant farmers. These rights have emboldened the *jyāpu* farmers to ignore traditional obligations to their landlords, particularly those involving labor.¹¹⁶ The advantages of donating land to a *guthī* in order to maintain usufruct for a specified purpose are diminishing, for in spite of the government's option to seize land through eminent domain, land reform regulations provide a new degree of security against confiscation (Regmi 1968:19).

Land, which has for so long served to ensure the survival of the Newar way of life, is now at the heart of controversy which threatens to unravel Newar tradition. As Regmi has noted,

... the *guthī* system has provided the necessary financial backing for the preservation of medieval culture and tradition of the Newar community, and... many traditional festivals would have disappeared in the absence of this system. This financial support, however, was secured at the cost of social and agrarian exploitation which hindered economic progress (1965:117).

The *jātrā* which is the subject of this dissertation is molded by tensions between a rising consciousness of the need to preserve Newar culture and a desire for economic progress, anger over meager compensation for the hard work the *jātrā*

¹¹⁶Many of these obligations entailed the services of *jyāpus* during family rituals, processions, and feasts as porters. The *rath jātrā* of Dolakha is on the verge of extinction due to the refusal of *jyāpus*, newly secure in their tenancy rights, to honor traditional obligations.

requires, and concern that the *jātrā* proceed smoothly and in accordance with tradition.

Fundamental features of Newar society, such as their language, *guthīs*, and caste system, define its unique character and yet are manifested in many different forms. The *guthī* plays an important role in defining the social identity of the Newar individual, lineage, caste, and population as a whole. *Guthī* organizations also cross-cut these social divisions, yielding a great variety of institutions which are all based on the same fundamental principals. Among the most distinctive characteristics of Newar society is the variation it encompasses. It is on the basis of this observation that I proceed to describe the Newar's largest festival as a part of their many different lives.

CHAPTER IV

FUNDAMENTAL FEATURES OF NEWAR RELIGION: NEWARS AND GODS

The discussion of Newar society has thus far, for the sake of clarity, considered religion only briefly; but such brevity obfuscates the pervasive role of religion in Newar life. As noted in the preceding chapter, social identity is ineluctably linked with ritual obligation and privilege. Toffin has noted this with reference to the *digu dyā:*, stating that

...the social units, - proto-clans, clans, lineages - of the locality have no coherence but for a certain number of collective ceremonies which regroup the entirety of their membership in the unified worship of a particular divinity. From this point of view, the cult of tutelary divinities is a decisive element: it gives substance to kinship groups, attaches them to mythic times, and maintains their spirit of solidarity. (1984:81, my translation)

It is impossible to understand the religious meaning of *digu dyā:* worship without discussing its social significance, just as its social meaning cannot be comprehended without an appreciation of its religious significance; neither realm of meaning merely legitimatizes or derives from the other. Toffin suggests that this holds true not only for the worship of clan divinities, but for Newar culture in general, stating that "The relations between society and religion are not totally external, of the cause and effect type; these two domains are profoundly isomorphic. (1984:81, my translation)

Society and Religion: a false distinction

Criticism of the teleological fallacies of structural functionalist explanation¹ is nothing new and the Newar are not unique in defying the capacity of this model to explain their culture adequately. The Newar are exceptional, perhaps, in terms of how difficult it is to conceptualize Newar "religion" and Newar "society" as discrete realms of thought or action, even on a provisional basis.

Geertz's definition of religion, cited below, has been highly influential due to its elegance and capacity to embrace a wide variety of phenomena and beliefs.

... a religion is: a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." (Geertz 1973:90)

This definition is problematic, however, because of its characterization of religious "moods and motivations" as "uniquely realistic", and it is particularly problematic in the Newar context. Slusser (1984:221) has accurately observed that:

It is obvious that in the Kathmandu Valley, religion is not a compartment to be entered once a week or in times of stress, but an all-pervasive force that continuously affects almost every action in each person's life, even those actions that are ostensibly secular and social.

In light of the observations of Toffin and Slusser, does the distinction "religious" in the sense proposed by Geertz have meaning in the Newar context?

¹These fallacies include the assumption that societies are in homeostatic equilibrium, and that beliefs, customs and institutions can be accurately understood in terms of their role in preservation of the status quo. An unexpressed corollary to these assumptions is that the categorization of behaviors or beliefs as "religious" or "social" is legitimized in so far as the disparate phenomena encompassed within any such category can be shown to "function" similarly with respect to the maintenance of homeostasis. The implied legitimacy, is, of course, tautological.

We may turn to Geertz's definition of culture for a restatement of the problem, if not its solution. For Geertz, culture is:

... an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. (Ibid:89)

Religion, then, is a system of symbols that expresses religious "conceptions"; part of the "system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms" which constitutes culture. This part of Geertz's definition is useful to us, but his assertions concerning the affect of religious symbols is not.

Western scholars tend to categorize as "religious" those actions or beliefs which they feel are based on conceptualizations cloaked in an "aura of factuality" rather than factuality itself. Much of Newar behavior and material culture has symbolic content which is accessible only through an understanding of beliefs which are often designated as "religious" due to their "exotic" or "irrational" nature. For these reasons, the statement that "religion pervades Newar life" seems accurate to the Western outsider familiar with Newar ways. I suspect, however, that it would appear absurd to the Newar who perform many so-called "religious activities" with pragmatic ease as an essential part of their daily routine.

I will proceed to delineate basic themes which dominate Newar concepts about gods and human interactions with gods and tentatively label these conceptions "religious". I acknowledge the ethnocentricity of our designation "religious" and use this label provisionally out of the necessity of dividing discourse into comprehensible areas of concern. Though variation in belief and action is of primary interest in the examination of the *jātrā* to follow, some fundamental aspects of religious belief which many Newars hold in common must first be considered. Several fundamental concepts concerning the relationship between humans and

gods are pervasive and constitute basic common assumptions upon which differences of interpretation and action are based. The most obvious of these concepts concerns the presence of divinities on earth.

Divine Presence

Gods as well as humans crowd Newar settlements. It is virtually impossible to stand anywhere in the Newar urban landscape and not be able to see at least one representation of a divinity. More often, one is overwhelmed by countless numbers of them. In addition to images which clearly represent divine beings, mundane features of the environment are also venerated as gods or places inhabited by gods.

It has already been noted that aniconic stones are commonly worshipped as *digu dyā:s*, or clan deities. Ganeshes, *aṣṭamātrkāṣ*,² and other gods and goddesses are also commonly worshipped in this form. Some of these stones seem to have originally been images which were gradually worn to shapelessness by weather and worship. Others possess subtle natural features which are evocative of a god's form, but most seem to have always been utterly void of iconic figuration.³ Sometimes situated in the middle of roads,⁴ these stones are

²Eight "mother-goddesses" regarded as protectors capable of great harm and to whom sacrifice is commonly offered.

³The evolution of the divine identity of these aniconic gods is a dissertation topic in itself. The "discovery" of these gods by humans is a standard theme in the explanations of their origins, as if the presence of gods among humans is continually being substantiated by their ubiquitous appearance in mundane forms.

often indistinguishable from ordinary stones except for the traces of pigment left by worshippers.

Architectural elements are also identified with deities, both in general and in unique instances. Holes in the brick walls of Newar houses, which served originally to support scaffolding during construction, are often left open, either out of compassion for birds who may nest there, or as aniconic shrines to *vāyu*, the wind god (Cf. Lewis 1984:125). The ground just outside the entranceway to every house is associated with Kumar, whether or not a lotus emblem has been drawn or sculpted there. Pillars are identified with Lord Shiva in union with his wife, Parvati, who is identified with their capitals.⁵

Architectural elements in certain buildings may also be worshipped as specific deities which are not recognized in the same features of other buildings. One such example is the pillar in Hayagriha Bhairab's temple in Bungamati which is honored as Bhimdya (Bhimsen). This pillar bears no feature which would associate it with Bhimdya other than the strength required of any pillar to support a roof.⁶ The Newar environment is replete with gods, many of which are indistinguishable to the outsider but for traces of vermillion, rice, or blood: evidence that they have been worshipped.

⁴It is not unusual to come upon a treacherous pit in the middle of a newly paved road, at the bottom of which lies a divine rock at the level of the original dirt by-way. This pit grows deeper and more treacherous with each paving. Occasionally metal gratings are placed over these holes to mitigate the problem, giving the god the appearance of a storm drain to the uninitiated.

⁵This and many other identifications of architectural elements are detailed in the *Sthirobhava-vākya*, or "Prayers Read at the Consecration of a House", translated in Slusser (1982:420-21).

⁶Bhimdya, or Bhima as he is more commonly known in the sub-continent, is the strongest of the five Pandava brothers as described in the Mahabharata.

Specific gods are associated with nearly any space one may enter, whether the space is defined by the walls of a house, a courtyard, a neighborhood, a village, or the entire valley. Every neighborhood or *tole* has its own Ganesh and *chwāsa dyā:*, or god who presides over the community repository of polluted items.⁷ Crossroads and water sources are likely to be decorated with offerings to gods known to frequent them.⁸ People share their environment with gods at all times. It is up to the individual to acknowledge or ignore their presence according to his or her own convenience and needs.

Just as the presence of gods is physically marked nearly everywhere, so does the mundane enter into space and action which is clearly the domain of gods. Temples not only house gods, but may also shelter shops which can all but engulf them. Ritual activity is often interspersed with casual socializing and levity. Only rarely does ritual demarcate rigid barriers of space or time which exclude normal social intercourse. These juxtapositions of "secular" and "sacred" are not necessarily products of disrespect or indifference. The boundary between these realms is often difficult to discern, and, indeed, may not exist at all. Standards of propriety which outsiders consider appropriate in the presence of a god or place of worship are often unfairly applied to the Newar, whose apparent casualness is

⁷Things which must be disposed of at *chwāsas* include, for example, the clothes of the deceased and clothes soiled at births.

⁸Many *pujās* conclude with offerings made at crossroads to the malevolent beings thought to frequent them. Wells, springs, water pumps and even outdoor faucets are often decorated with long twisted bits of cotton striped with red; offerings to the *nāgas*, or serpent deities, which are associated with water. Lewis (1980:125) reports that "... every area's well has a resident *nāga*."

often interpreted as a sign of the decadence of their tradition.⁹ Though particular circumstances may require special comportment in the presence of gods, for the Newar there is nothing exceptional about merely being in their company.

Hindus and Buddhists, Hinduism and Buddhism

Before discussing Hindus and Buddhists in terms of their involvement with Bungadya and his annual festival, it is important to consider, in more general terms, the meaning of religious affiliation and identity in Newar society. I have argued above that the coexistence of Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism in Nepal has persisted and evolved for centuries longer than in India where it ceased with the Muslim ascendancy to power. Levi has stated that to attempt to define a Newar god as either Hindu or Buddhist would be absurd (1905). Though hyperbolic, this statement accurately reflects the fact that relatively few popular deities are worshipped exclusively by either Buddhists or Hindus. Many have suggested that the only way to distinguish a Buddhist Newar from a Hindu Newar is to observe which priest he or she summons. This strategy may yield conflicting results, for it is not unusual for one family to employ either one or the other depending on the particular occasion (Lewis 1984:369, Rosser 1978:76). One can simply inquire whether a person is a *Bauddhamargi* or *Śivamargi*, but for many the dichotomy, and therefore the question, is false, prompting the respondent to either make a choice which he or she is not normally called upon to make, or to simply reply that he or she is both.

⁹This is not to suggest that there is no evidence of a decline in orthopraxy. It is to suggest that we measure changes in tradition among the Newar in accordance with Newar notions of propriety rather than imposing those of others.

There are, of course, those whose social identity is rigorously defined in terms of their religious affiliation, and they are usually high caste or *sanyāsi* who have rejected caste. There are also those who will readily identify themselves as Buddhist or Hindu, but whose practices or beliefs do not comply with the criteria of the higher castes. To proclaim oneself a *Śivamargi* entails identification with the ruling elite. Slusser has suggested that to profess to being a *Śivamargi* "...has long been fashionable and politic..." (1982).¹⁰ To a certain extent, proclaiming oneself to be a Buddhist may be linked with an assertion of Newar identity, for there are traditionally no Buddhists among the *Parbāṭiya* (Cf. Gellner:1986). It is not unusual for Buddhist Newars to disparage *Sesya*: who have abandoned their Newar culture by calling them "*Bāhuns*" (brahmins), the exemplars of Hindu society.

Though Nepal is widely known as a haven for the peaceful coexistence of Hinduism and Buddhism, this peace does not exist without rivalry. This rivalry is usually displayed in the realm of myth, ritual, and symbol, and rarely seems to surface in overt hostility in the social arena.¹¹ The lifestyles of Newar Buddhists and Hindus do not differ sufficiently to catalyze conflict; there is probably as much variation within each group as between the two. Few Newars are vegetarian. All but the impure castes shun pork and beef, neither Hindus nor Buddhists observe a sabbath or its equivalent, and both Hindus and Buddhists respect many of the

¹⁰Slusser's actual statement, that it has been "fashionable to profess Śivamarga, the premier religion...", is inaccurate in the sense that "*Śivamarga*" denotes one who is on the road of Shiva, or a follower of Shiva, not a religion.

¹¹Riccardi has cited an historical reference to Hindu/Buddhist discord in a Licchavi inscription by a Vaisnaiva poet who invokes the Mahabharata as an "anti Buddhist tract," but notes that this is the only such note of conflict in the Licchavi material (1980:272).

same gods. To the extent that they do differ in behavior, it is in their means of gaining access to gods and their estimation of the relative powers of gods and priests.

Divine Rivalry: the relative status of gods

Horst Brinkaus has challenged the predominant view, which characterizes the relationship between Hindus and Buddhists in Nepal as tolerant, preferring to refer to this relationship as one of "non-intolerance" or "inclusivism" (1987:1). Though his challenge is based more on criticism of the lack of evidence for the conventional viewpoint than a marshalling of evidence to promote his own, his points that inclusivism is "universal in the Indian history of ideas" and involves the subordination of "alien doctrines" are well taken. That the Buddha is considered one of the ten avatars of Vishnu may be regarded as evidence of tolerance, but it also involves the conceptualization of Buddha as encompassed by another deity. Though some Buddhists proclaim all gods to be one, I have never heard of any, either in myth or otherwise, approaching Vishnu as a means of access to the Buddha, thereby acknowledging Vishnu's pre-eminence.¹²

More Buddhist images and rituals tend to express Buddhist dominance over Hindu deities than vice versa, the legacy, perhaps, of symbolic compensation for the prevailing domination of Buddhists by Hindu rulers throughout Nepalese history. The procession of the Dipankara Buddha, who is said to have brought

¹²One famous example of the political significance of professing Buddhist identity and its implications for the attribution of status to Hindu gods was the mass conversion of untouchables to Buddhism orchestrated by Ambedkar in Maharashtra in 1956. The vows which were composed and administered by Ambedkar at this conversion "...specifically denied that the Buddha was or could be considered as an *avatār* of Vishnu." (Gokhale 1986:276)

Buddhism to Nepal, is usually depicted with the major deities of the Hindu pantheon, Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswar (Shiva) in attendance to him. *Sṛiṣṭikāntā Lokeśwar*, one of 108 manifestations of the Bodhisattva *Avalokiteśvara*, is usually depicted with twelve or more other deities emanating from him, including two of the dominant trinity of Hinduism: Shiva and Vishnu.¹³

One form of *Avalokiteśvara*, *Hariharivāhana Lokeśwar*, which is rarely sculpted¹⁴ but often depicted in paintings in *bāṇā* courtyards, provides another example of inclusivism which expresses dominance.¹⁵ This manifestation depicts *Avalokiteśvara* standing on the shoulders of Vishnu, who is, in turn, seated on *Avalokiteśvara*'s *vāhana* (vehicle), the lion, which is perched on top of Vishnu's *vāhana*, the Garuda, who is grasping a *nāga* serpent deity. A popular Buddhist story explains this image as follows: upon seeing Garuda attacking his traditional enemy, the *nāga*, *Avalokiteśvara*'s lion *vāhana* joined the fray, taking the side of the *nāga*. Seeing his Garuda *vāhana* at a disadvantage, Vishnu intervened. The

¹³The *Vajrācāryas* with whom I have discussed this image refer to this god as evidence of *Avalokiteśvara*'s all-encompassing power as compared to those divinities which emanate from him. This image, as with all images, may be subject to different interpretations. One of the most conspicuous examples is to be found prominently displayed on a window of the Patan darbar known as *lhumjhyā*, or "golden window". This seems an unlikely location for an image which unambiguously implies the superiority of a Bodhisattva over Vishnu and Shiva, particularly if it was erected in the nineteenth century, as Slusser suggests (1984:202, pl. 140). These facts suggest that an ecumenical statement of universality was intended in this context rather than an expression of Buddhist superiority.

¹⁴There are only two publicly accessible sculpted images of this deity with which I am familiar. One is a small, well-worn image located on the north-west corner of the plinth of a *cībā*: near the top of the stairs leading to Santipur from Swayambhu, and the other is a bas relief sculpted in the doorway of the *kwāpā dyā*: of Chwakhan Bahi, located near Lagan in Kathmandu.

¹⁵This name, meaning the *Lokeśwar* with three vehicles, implies that Vishnu is a *vāhana*, or vehicle, of *Avalokiteśvara*, and therefore subservient to him.

benevolent *Avalokiteśvara*, upon seeing this struggle, interceded and convinced all of the protagonists to live in harmony, whereupon they accepted his wisdom and he took his place on the shoulders of Vishnu.

Buddhists worship one of the most sacred shrines to Vishnu at Cangunarayan not because they regard the Buddha as Vishnu's *avatār*, but because they regard the image as *Hariharihivāhana Lokeśwar*. This shrine is one of twelve shrines to different *Lokeśwars* featured in a popular year-long pilgrimage cycle.¹⁶ The image is evidently one of Vishnu seated on his Garuda *vāhana*, but Newar Buddhists claim that the *Lokeśwar* which stands on Vishnu's shoulders is usually concealed or removed by the Brahmin attendant.¹⁷

Some of the most famous conflicts between proponents of Buddhism and Hinduism are the debates which Sankaracarya¹⁸ is said to have had with Nepalese Buddhists. At Vajrayogini, a shrine worshipped by both Hindus and Buddhists,

¹⁶A group from Bungamati followed this route in 1984 and included Changunarayan as one of their sites. Karunakar Vaidya mentions this practice in his account of Newar Buddhist traditions and lists Changunarayan as one of the twelve *Lokeśwars* so honored (1986:289).

¹⁷Only Hindus are theoretically allowed to view the Cangunarayan image, though the restriction is usually only applied to foreigners. In plate 11 of Mohan Khanal's *Camgunārayanā Aitihāsik Sāmagrī* (which, astonishingly, seems to be a photograph of the central Cangunaryan figure) the image appears to be a *Garudasana* Vishnu (B.S. 2040).

¹⁸Sankara, or Sankaracharya, was a Hindu reformer theologian in the ninth century who, though he probably never came to Nepal, is described in Nepalese legends and chronicles as having engaged in contests of magic and theological debate in the Kathmandu valley (Cf. Slusser 1984:49).

there is an unusual overturned stone *cībā*.¹⁹ which is said to have been the consequence of one of these debates in which Sankaracarya was victorious.

Most evidence of contention between Buddhists and Hindus is embodied in iconography and the myths which explain the forms which gods take. Depending upon who is telling the tale, it was either Vishnu with his discus or Manjusri with his sword who made the Kathmandu valley habitable by draining a primordial lake. Alternate versions of myth are frequently redactions of one story refitted with alternate protagonists, frequently shifting from a member of one pantheon to his or her equivalent in the other.

Brinkhaus is correct in noting the subordination involved in much of the inclusive incorporation of deities to be found in Newar mythology and iconography. However, contrary to Brinkhaus' assertion, there is no contradiction between this and Nepali's statement that "between Newar Hinduism and Buddhism there is more mutual recognition and exchange of beliefs and ritual than conflict" (Nepali 1965:29, as cited by Brinkhaus 1980:280). Conflicts between gods are not limited in the Newar tradition to disputes between the champions of Hinduism and Buddhism.²⁰ More frequently they concern simple power struggles among the extraordinarily powerful. The first rituals performed by both Hindus and Buddhists

¹⁹This *cībā*: is located near the top of the stairs leading to Vajrayogini on the west side above the Ganesh which accepts sacrifices in Vajrayogini's stead. This *cībā*: is unusual not only in that it is inverted but also in that it seems to have been carved from living rock in this position. It is as if the *cībā*: was created in accordance with the myth rather than the myth being inspired by the *cībā*:.

²⁰This should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the mythic corpus of the subcontinent; the Mahabharata is principally a tale of conflict among gods.

every day upon leaving the home are said to be the legacy of a struggle between the brothers Kumar and Ganesh, sons of Lord Shiva.

The Newar pay obeisance to Kumar at their threshold, for he is said to reside at the entrance to each house. In some cases his presence is marked by a lotus of stone carved into the pavement, in others it is marked only by a trace of *sindur* and a sprinkle of rice left from previous *pujaās*. Newars then honor another of Shiva's sons, the elephant-headed Ganesh, who is enshrined in each *tol*, or neighborhood. After honoring these two gods, which may entail little more than sprinkling a bit of rice or water or briefly bowing, one may then proceed to worship other deities according to habit or particular needs.

The fraternal dispute which is popularly cited to explain this regimen is described as a consequence of the difference between the *vāhanas* upon which these gods are mounted. Whereas Kumar is blessed with a swift and elegant *vāhana*, the peacock, Ganesh has only the improbably small shrew to convey his bulk. Kumar, it is told,²¹ once decided to spread his fame and gain the respect of people all over the world and flew off on his peacock to do so. Ganesh, at first disheartened by his own inability to compete with his brother, decided that he would slowly visit every locality, gaining devotees nearby. When Kumar returned from his distant travels he discovered to his dismay that everyone was first worshipping Ganesh in each and every *tole*. In response, Kumar again took advantage of his swiftness to visit every home, thus regaining his precedence in worship.²²

²¹This story is told by both Hindus and Buddhists as well as by those who would describe themselves as both.

²²Another story explains the necessity, recognized by both Buddhists and Hindus, of honoring Ganesh before performing any major *pujā* to another god.

This story is one of many that can be offered as evidence of the pervasiveness of religion in everyday Newar life. As shall later become apparent in the myths associated with the *jātrā* of Bungadya, the story of Ganesh and Kumar is also only one of many stories which illustrate the prevalence of divine power-struggles in Newar explanations for their traditions.

Public Expression of Partisan Religious Orientation

As Lewis (1984:439) has noted, the majority of Newar festivals are celebrated by both Hindus and Buddhists, though their practices on these occasions sometimes differ. These public displays of devotion can also serve as arenas for the assertion of the superiority of one *dharma* over the other, though this is not the usual case. Lewis reports that the Buddhist Tuladhars pointedly avoid visiting Pashupatinath on Shiva Ratri, the night on which fires are kept burning at Shiva's shrines²³ and when Hindus from all over the subcontinent visit Pashupatinath²⁴ (1984:415). He also notes that Buddhists living in Assan tole believe that they should avoid even seeing *Sāparū* (*Gāi Jātrā*, Nep.),²⁵ an elaborate Hindu procession in honor of the year's deceased. This is due to its association with Mara, the embodiment of temptation which attempted to deter the Buddha from his meditation by assuming many different forms (1984:370). Apparently the

²³Fires are also lit at aniconic stones associated with Shiva, some of which, in Patan at least, seem to be honored only at this time.

²⁴Though Lewis describes this as a strictly Hindu Festival, the attendants of Bungadya place a special apron on Bungadya in honor of this occasion. This apron is the same as that worn by tantric Shaivite devotees (John Locke, personal communication).

²⁵*Gāi Jātrā* literally means "cow festival", due to the practice of giving a cow to a Brahmin on this day, a practice Buddhist Newars also observe, though not at this time. The cow (i.e. Laksmi), is believed to aid the soul of the deceased.

elaborate costumes and obscene gesturing which are often features of the *Sāparu* processions are equated with the distractions and temptations to which the Buddha was subjected (Cf. Vaidya 1986:58).

In Patan, the most elaborate annual Hindu procession, *Sāparu*, is followed the next day by the year's most elaborate Buddhist procession, *Matayā*. This second festival involves thousands of individuals in Patan, where it is celebrated in its most extensive form.²⁶ A procession route which includes every shrine in Patan honored by Buddhists, from the smallest *cībā*: to the most elaborate temple, snakes through every alley and even through some homes, and requires at least twelve hours to complete. Participation in this procession is expected of those who have had a death in the immediate family, but many others also participate. Among them, every year, is an individual dressed as Shiva the ascetic, garlanded with snakes and carrying a trident. The spectacle of Lord Shiva prostrating himself before *cībā*:s and other explicitly Buddhist shrines provokes some Hindu Newars to express their displeasure, but it is a traditional part of the festival, and did not provoke overtly antagonistic reactions in the three *Matayā*: processions I observed.

The predominantly Buddhist population of Bungamati provides an unusual context within which to observe this kind of Hindu-Buddhist rivalry. The Tuladhars and Bare in Bungamati deride the few women who observe Tij there. These women, on one occasion which I witnessed, publicly observed the festival by

²⁶*Matayā*: is also celebrated in Bungamati and Khokana, as well as in Kathmandu, where it is more explicitly tied to the deceased.

attending readings of the *Swasthani vrata katha*²⁷ which were given by a Brahmin hired from outside the village. The Buddhist men dismissed the women and their rites as "*Śiva marga*" and they referred to the women derogatorily as "*Śreṣṭhās*", though *jyāpunis* and others were also involved.²⁸

The *pānjus* of Bungamati boast that there is not a single *Śiva liṅga* to be found in their village, a remarkable claim which I cannot contradict in spite of having thoroughly explored its every *chuk* and *nani*. Bungamati is exceptional in that it is dominated in many ways by the Buddhist priests who attend Bungadya. It is perhaps due to the importance of Bungadya and his Buddhist attendants that the Bungepim have not erected *Śiva liṅga* shrines which abound in most other villages and towns in the valley.

Human Access to Divine Power

The role of ritual and the power of ritual officiants among both Hindu and Buddhist Newars cannot be fully appreciated without a fundamental understanding of what Bharati has labelled the "tantric tradition" (1975). The term "tantric" is

²⁷These stories concern, among other things, the fast which Parvati underwent in order to win the affection of Lord Shiva. Tij is observed in the summer by Hindu women by undergoing a very strict fast in commemoration of Parvati's austerities (Cf. Bennett 1983:218-225), the stories are also told during the month of *Magh* (January-February).

²⁸On one occasion in Bungamati during the Buddhist *Cakan dyā: jātrā* ("clay god festival"), the *Vajrācārya* priest removed a sacred thread bracelet acquired from a Brahmin at *janai pūrṇīmā* from the wrist of a participant prior to giving her tika. *Cakan dyā: jātrā*, in which women combine thousands of miniature clay *caityas* which they have made over the course of the Buddhist holy month of *Gūnlā* into a communal offering, is markedly Buddhist, whereas *janai pūrṇīmā* is the day for renewing the sacred cord (*janai*) of the Brahmin, and therefore markedly Hindu. The custom of making thousands of miniature *caityas* is also known as *luchidya thayegu* (Vaidya 1986:127) and *Gūnlā dyā: thayegu* (Lewis 1984:359-60).

applied to rituals, practitioners, gods, a body of literature, and beliefs, and its meaning can vary substantially with context and the speaker. In general it refers to a fundamental premise that release from the cycle of rebirth can be achieved in one's lifetime through ritual practice in which the practitioner achieves mastery of divine power by emulating divinity through a meditative process of visualization. This process of visualization, which entails empowerment and control over the divine, is called *sādhana*. This process is central to the tantric tradition and our understanding of Newar beliefs about their gods. I have previously noted the influence of tantrism on the development of householder priests insofar as sexual abstinence is contra-indicated. I have also noted the complexity and profusion of theories concerning the theoretical evolution of the Buddhist monk to the Buddhist householder priest, and cannot fully treat these issues here. It is necessary, however, to discuss how tantra empowers the priest with respect to gods and laity.

The tantric adept is empowered through the process of *sādhana*, the hallmark of the tantric tradition. Agehananda Bharati describes the importance of *sādhana* to the tantric tradition as follows;

What distinguishes tantric from other Hindu and Buddhist teaching is its systematic emphasis on the identity of the absolute (*paramārtha*) and the phenomenal (*vyavahāra*) world when filtered through the experience of *sādhana*. Tantric literature is not of the philosophical genre; the stress is on *sādhana*." (1975:18)

The importance of *sādhana* is not only evident in esoteric literature, but also in the Newar layman's understanding of tantra and in its frequent mention in Newar mythology.

Tantra promotes a "psycho-experimental" shortcut to achieving enlightenment²⁹ and release from the endless cycle of rebirth. The objective and the assumptions which underlay tantrism are not distinctive; Bharati points out that "the axiom of inevitable metempsychosis" and the "notion of possible emancipation" from reincarnation are "common to all Indian philosophy" (1975:17). He goes on to state that "... the real difference between tantric and non-tantric traditions is methodological: tantra is the psycho-experimental interpretation of non-tantric lore." (1975:20) This psycho-experimental method is known as *sādhana*.

The Sanskrit word, *sādhana*, is defined by Monier-Williams as "leading straight to a goal", the oft-cited objective of vajrayana Buddhism. Other definitions given include "procuring," "conjuring up," and "the act of mastering, overpowering, subduing" and "summoning" (Monier-Williams 1979:1201). These latter definitions are more faithful to the popular Newar concept of the purpose of *sādhana* as commonly practiced and as related in myths. Locke states that the Vajrayana masters use the term to mean

... a visualization and calling forth of a deity, i.e., an evocation, which leads the worshipper straight to the goal of Vajrayana Buddhism, namely the realization of the void (*sunyata*) and the identification of the worshipper with it." (1980:115)

Locke's lucid description of the meditative process of *sādhana* relies extensively on Blofield's work on the tantric mysticism of Tibet (1970), just as I must rely on his work and the work of Bharati and others in order to elucidate the esoteric basis of modern day tantric practice.

²⁹Bharati describes this state as the "supreme intuitive realization postulated by the Indian religious traditions" (1975:270 n.26).

This reliance on textual prescriptions of orthopraxy as a basis for understanding modern practice is contrary to the methodological principles which constitute the foundation of my approach to Newar studies. Unfortunately, the esoteric nature of tantric ritual virtually precludes participant observation,³⁰ and renders direct questioning through interviews difficult, if not impertinent. These difficulties are exacerbated (or perhaps obviated) by the fact, as Locke notes, that the *Vajrācārya* priests have largely "abandon(ed) the prerequisites for making use of such rituals, i.e. the prior scholarship and mastery of yogic techniques and meditation." (1980:121) Given this observation and the explanations offered to me by *Vajrācāryas*, Locke's definition of *sādhana* seems idealized to the extent that he implies that "the realization of the void" is its primary objective. The point of examining tantric orthopraxy, itself a paradoxical endeavour given the fundamentally heretical nature of tantrism,³¹ is to reconcile my understanding of contemporary Newar practice with extant scholarship on the subject, the bulk of which is based on textual sources.

The single most important meditative tool at the disposal of the tantric adept is the *mantra*.³² Though the term "*mantra*" is widely used in the South Asian context to refer to anything from a recitation of text to formulaic incantation, in the Newar context it is most often used in a more specific sense which links it to the

³⁰Agehenanda Bharati (né Leopold Fischer) is, perhaps, uniquely qualified to discuss tantra as Sanskrit scholar, tantric initiate, and anthropologist.

³¹Bharati states categorically that "All tantrics flout traditional, exoteric orthodoxy, all put experiment above conventional morality denying ultimate importance to moralistic considerations... all agree that their specific method is dangerous and radical..." (1975:21).

³²Bharati points out that most tantric literature is devoted to the *mantra*, and accordingly devotes his longest chapter to that subject (1975:101-164).

process of *sādhana* or the empowerment and/or protection which this process affords. The vital role played by the *mantra* in *sādhana* can be illustrated with the following example from a Newari/Sanskrit manual for the performance of fire sacrifices, or *hwama*, cited by Locke (1980:118-119). This text concerns the first meditation on the god of fire, Agni, as performed in the *hwama pujā*.

Meditate on the following - in the midst of the burning fire arises a lotus from the syllable *pam*, above this the *mandala* of Agni arises from the syllable *rum* from which arises the conventional being Agni of yellow color, one-faced, having four hands...

Blofeld illustrates the coextensive identity of self, the deity, and the *mantra* as follows:

The deity enters the adept's body and sits upon a solar-disk supported by a lunar disk above a lotus in his heart; presently the adept shrinks in size until he and the deity are coextensive; then, merging indistinguishably, they are absorbed by the seed-syllable [*mantra*] from which the deity originally sprang; this syllable contracts into a single point; the point vanishes and the deity and adept in perfect union remain sunk in the *samadhi* of voidness, sometimes for hours and occasionally for days. (Blofeld 1970:85-86, as cited by Locke 1980)

Bharati observes that "...Brahmins often refer to tantric texts as *mantra-sāstra*" (1975:101), an association which is apparently shared by Newars who commonly refer to esoteric ritual which they feel ill-equipped to explain as "*tantric-mantric chij*" ("tantric-mantric things").³³ Bharati provides the following definition of *mantra* which deliberately excludes any mention of purpose in order to ensure its universality:

A *mantra* is a quasi-morpheme or a series of quasi-morphemes, or a series of mixed genuine and quasi-morphemes arranged in

³³This appellation is also widely used to refer to sacrifices which involve some degree of vivisection whereby the blood is squirted from the victim by its still throbbing heart (*hi athem waye*, "blood comes of its own accord"). The term "*tantric-mantric*" is often used in this case as a means of distancing the speaker from the practice, as it is implied that it is beyond his understanding.

conventional patterns, based on codified esoteric traditions, and passed on from the preceptor to one disciple in the course of a prescribed initiation ritual. (1973:111)

It should be noted that the transmission of the *mantra* must take place in a specific manner in order that it empower the initiated. This requirement is of great importance for understanding of the politics of ritual empowerment which will be considered further below.

Bharati lists three different possible purposes for which a *mantra* may be employed: "... propitiation, acquisition, and identification or introjection." (Ibid) The latter is its "... most hallowed purpose..." according to Bharati, who goes on to assert that:

...even the humblest sorcerer who uses *mantra* for propitiation or for acquisition will readily admit his shortcoming- *at least in India*; he will emend, if pressed to do so, that the actual purpose of *mantra* ought to be something close to what I called identification, or introjection. (1975:113, emphasis added)

Mantra as described here can also be interpreted as a metonym for the *sādhana* of which it can be part. *Sādhana* as employed in the Newar rituals and myths to be described here usually has acquisition, in the senses of "mastering" and "summoning" cited by Monier-Williams, as its purpose. To the extent that "identification or introjection" is a goal for the *Vajrācārya* priest performing *sādhana*, it is a technique whereby "acquisition" of the god can take place.

The difficulties mentioned previously make it imprudent to generalize about the motivations and conceptions which inspire Newar tantric adepts to perform *sādhana*s; we are limited to considering their desired effects. Insofar as we can rely on the brief explanations which *Vajrācāryas* provided to the anthropologist and our understanding of the role of *sādhana* in Newar mythology, Bharati's qualification, "at least in India", seems appropriate. The Newar Buddhist priest in

Nepal seldom admits to the "higher" purpose of "identification" through *sādhana*. It is his power and responsibility to summon divinities and put them to his service which he stresses.

Ritual and the Power of the Priest

The efficacy of the *mantra*, the most important tool for the performance of *sādhana*, depends upon its confidential conferral upon the initiate by his or her guru; Newar priests carefully preserve the secrecy of *mantras* used for initiation (Locke 1980:49). Access to the power of *sādhana* is strictly controlled. This insistence upon proper initiation involving a confidential relationship between guru and initiate is required not only to assure the *mantra*'s (and, therefore, the initiate's) efficacy, but to shield the unprepared novice from the potential dangers of the tantric path.³⁴

Though access to this path and the power it confers is controlled, Toffin notes that this control is of a radically different nature than the restrictive access to power maintained by the caste society which was challenged in the tantras.

The tantras introduced the idea of a religious power acquired by means of specific exercises and no longer only transmitted in a hereditary manner as in the case of Brahmins (1984:557 my translation).

The paradoxical situation of the Vajrayana Newar priest is that the privilege of acting as an intermediary between non-initiate and gods is hereditary, for only *Vajrācāryas* may be consecrated as priests and perform rituals on behalf of others. Conversely, *Vajrācāryas* must undergo tantric initiation (*ācā luyegu*, "the

³⁴The metaphorical *sandhābhāṣā* ("intentional language") used in tantric texts was also, in the opinion of some scholars, intended to protect the ill-prepared from danger (Bharati 1975:169).

consecration of a priest") in order to retain their caste status. This consecration alludes to and may involve, at least in symbolic form, the "central *sādhana* of tantrism"; ritual sexual intercourse.³⁵

Initiation, Copulation, and Power

The initiation rites of the Newar Buddhists have been extensively discussed by Locke (1975), Allen (1973) and others. Two aspects of these rites which pertain to the ritual power of the *Vajrācārya* merit some attention here. It has already been noted that access to the power of utilizing *sādhana* at the behest of others is limited by caste and rites of passage. Initiation rites also illustrate another fundamental concept concerning divine power and human access to it which is embodied in the imagery (and activity) of sexual intercourse.

The fact that tantric texts prescribe ritual copulation is occasionally debated by what Bharati might call puritanical apologists, but there is little doubt that this practice, the principal source of tantrism's infamy, was prescribed and carried out.³⁶ The issue of whether or not it is currently practiced among the Newar is a moot point, a subject of some gossip but fruitless inquiry. What little evidence we do have concerning the nature of esoteric tantric initiation suggests that the imagery of sexual union, if not its practice, is an essential aspect of contemporary Vajrayana ritual empowerment. The prevalence of this imagery in Newar myth,

³⁵"The central *sādhana* of tantrism, Buddhist and Hindu alike, is the exercise of sexual contact under tantric 'laboratory' conditions." (Bharati 1975:228)

³⁶Tibetan visitors to seventeenth century Nepal wrote of Newar Buddhists practicing *mudra tantra* which involved ritual intercourse (Todd Lewis, personal communication 1988).

ritual, and iconography³⁷ compels us to consider its meaning in the context of praxis as well as theory, and the tantric initiation provides us both perspectives.

Locke states that, in the final phase of the *ācā luyegu* called the *guhyabhiṣekha* ("secret consecration"), initiates are shown a picture of Heruka-cakrasamvara³⁸ in union with his consort. He suggests that this "... secret consecration was originally the consecration of the tantric Yogi with his consort and symbolizes the union of *prajna* and *upaya* (wisdom and means), the female and male principles of Vajrayana philosophy." (1980:48)³⁹ Allen provides details of the *ācā luyegu* as practiced in Patan which differ from the Kathmandu ritual described by Locke. In Patan the novice is not merely a witness, but participates in symbolic intercourse.

Placed in front of [the initiate] is a metal bowl known as the *patra* which contains red beer and is covered by a blue cloth. He lifts the cloth, drops a small piece of gold in the beer, dips his fingers in the liquid and rubs his eyes with it, and then lets three drops fall on his tongue. Finally, he takes the gold piece from the bowl and carefully places it on his forehead. (1973:11)

Allen cites an explanation supplied to him by his "*purohit*" ("priest") informant for this rite:

... the red beer is female, literally womb-liquid, while the gold piece is male spermatozoa. The female part stands for *prajna* - the wisdom of Vajrayana Buddhism - while the male part stands for

³⁷See Tucci (1969) for an illustrated treatment of erotic imagery in Nepalese temples.

³⁸The *Sādhanaṃālā* ("garland of *sādhana*s"), one of the most important *tantric* texts on the visualizations entailed in various *sādhana*s, describes Heruka as one who "...bestows Buddhahood and protects the world from the *Maras* (wicked beings)" (Bhattacharyya 1968:156). Heruka-cakrasamvara is one of many manifestations of Heruka.

³⁹It is unclear if by "originally" Locke intends to imply an earlier point in Newar practice or if he is referring to its source outside of the Nepalese Buddhist context.

upaya - the method or practice of wisdom. Furthermore, the act of dropping the gold in the beer is, as are all such symbolic fusions of male and female, a means of gaining enlightenment. (1973:11)⁴⁰

A further, more advanced initiation known as *dekhā*, is an option for the *Vajrācārya* as well as some other castes. Those initiated are admitted into the inner-most chambers of the *āgam* and accept a life-long commitment to worship the *āgam* deities daily with extensive rituals. Locke (1980:53) notes that customs concerning who may be given *dekhā* vary, but states that in Kathmandu it is essentially restricted to Bare and Uray, with some Citrakar who must be admitted to the *āgam* to paint the images within also eligible for initiation.⁴¹ Toffin correctly notes that numerous groups involved in the annual *jātrā* of Bungadya, as well as members of other castes are also given *dekhā* (1984:557).⁴² The *Niyekhu* who paint the image of Bungadya, the carpenters who build the *rath*, and others are

⁴⁰This interpretation closely parallels Bharati's description of the installation of the *śrīpātra* ("honored bowl"), a rite which is preparatory for the *sādhana* of sexual union. The installation of the *śrīpātra* the most important of the *pātram*, ends with the following meditation: "...aiming at realizing the universal manifested Brahman ..., contemplating the copulation of Śiva and Śakti and imagining that the *rasa* (liquid, juice, the divine sperm) is caught in the *śrīpātra* and comingles with the flowers and other ingredients which form the contents of this bowl, he then worships the Śrī-bowl with incense and more flowers" (1975:255). The contents of all of the *pātram* include four substances (fish, meat, liquor, and parched kidney beans) the collective essence of which is considered the *kulāmrta* and alternatively conceptualized as "...the liquid which emerges from the contact of Śiva and Śakti" or "the *rajas* (menstrual fluid) of the goddess [Śakti]" (Ibid:260).

⁴¹Locke is, however, incorrect in saying that only initiated Bare may take *dekhā* in Patan (1980:52), an impression he may have gotten from Allen (1973:12) who is also incorrect in this regard.

⁴²Though that iconoclastic aspect of tantric ideology which dismisses the principle of caste privilege is not preserved in the case of Newar priests, it does apply to some others who seek other kinds special access to gods and are willing to assume the responsibilities which *dekhā* entails.

required to take an advanced initiation, though its nature varies considerably from group to group. Toffin describes the distinction between those who have taken *dekhā* (*dekhā du pīm*) and those who have not (*dekhā madupīm*) as fundamental in Newar religion.⁴³ Though the esoteric knowledge shared by the initiated is clearly not shared by the uninitiated, the notion that such knowledge is privileged and potentially powerful is.

All *dekhā*, both Hindu and Buddhist, seem to share one fundamental feature, the required presence of both the male initiator (the *gurubā*) and his wife (*gurumā*) (Toffin 1984:556, Allen 1973:12). The *dekhā* described by Allen is accessible only to initiated Bare, but it is the most detailed description available. In this *dekhā* the *gurubā* and *gurumā* are possessed by Vajrasattva and his consort. All initiants must have a counterpart of the opposite sex⁴⁴ with whom they appear before the entranced couple. Some texts suggest that the initiant couples engage in ritual intercourse at this point (Allen 1973:13). Though there may be considerable variation among these initiations, it is significant that all of them require the presence of a married initiator couple.⁴⁵

⁴³"Il y a dans la religion néwar un clivage fondamental entre les initiés (néw.:*dīksā du pī*) et les non-initiés (néw.:*dīksā maru pī*)."(Toffin 1984:555).

⁴⁴It is not clear if only males are considered initiants here. Bare women may take *dekhā* in Patan, though it is not clear if they are simultaneously initiated with their male counterparts or if they require a separate *dekhā*.

⁴⁵Toffin explains this requirement as follows: "...la femme est identifiée au pouvoir, *Śakti*, de Śiva; elle est le seul moyen d'accéder à l'absolu (1984:556). The sanskrit phrase, *Śivaḥ Śaktivihīnah śavaḥ* ("Śiva without Śakti is a corpse") is described by Bharati as "the great dictum of Hindu tantrics" (1975:202) and is well known and often repeated in Nepal. Bharati offers a comparable Buddhist saying which he also describes as oft-quoted, "...that *Upāya* is bondage when unassociated with *Prajñā*, and even *Prajñā* is bondage when unassociated with *Upāya*; both of them become liberation when associated with one another." (1975:209)

Bharati distinguishes between the Hindu and Buddhist conceptualizations of the union of *prajñā* and *upāya* represented by ritual coitus in several ways⁴⁶ which betray an image of the Buddhist tantric which is quite different from the Newar *Vajrācārya*. Though he acknowledges the widespread use of the term *śakti* to denote the energy and power that is realized through this union, he insists that its use in the Buddhist context is inappropriate,⁴⁷ and that the Buddhist tantric does not have power as an objective. "Whereas the notion of power (*śakti*) is of pivotal interest in Hindu tantrism, the central idea of tantric Buddhism is realization: *prajñā* joined to the *upāya*." (Lama Govinda as cited by Bharati 1975:214)

Bharati also offers a hypothetical explanation for another fundamental difference he sees between the Hindu and Buddhist tantric: the former releases his sperm in ritual coitus whereas the latter does not.

...the Buddhist tantric's concern is purely esoteric, his method experimental. He has no stake in ritual *per se*, and the notion of sacrificial oblation and libation means little if anything to him. His preceptors taught the spiritual and magical potentiality of the control of breath, thought, and sperm, and the importance of their retention. For the Hindu, on the other hand, the notion of ritualistic sacrifice is all-important. In fact, the idea of sacrifice (*yajña*) being at the base of every religious act has remained focal in Hinduism... (1975:266)

This explanation suggests a distinction between the Buddhist and Hindu adept which does not exist in the Newar context. Sacrifice in the form of the *hwama* plays a major role in the practice of the Newar Buddhist *Vajrācārya* (as well as the

⁴⁶One fundamental difference which does not bear directly on this argument is that the Hindu tantric ascribes precisely the opposite characteristics to the male and female, the former embodying passive wisdom and the latter active means from the Hindu perspective.

⁴⁷He also suggests that the use of the term *śakti* to apply to the female consorts of Buddhist gods is incorrect except in a limited number of cases (1975:210-215). Newar Buddhists, however, commonly use the term *śakti* to apply to Tara or any other goddess when identifying her as the consort of a male deity.

Tibetan lama). If we assume that Bharati's apparent generalization is in fact intended to pertain only to the rarified atmosphere of the "experimental laboratory" of sexual *sādhana*, then we can offer no argument. Otherwise, Bharati's statements concerning the Buddhist tantric's indifference to ritual empowerment and "ritual *per se*" are incredible, given our knowledge of the role of ritual in Tibetan and Newar Vajrayana Buddhism. Beyer's observations on the purpose of *sādhana* for the Buddhist are more to the point:

The aim of all contemplative manipulation is the power to control the mind, the breath, the universe. Power is the key, and the source of power is the deity; ... To create and become the deity is to "own" the deity in one's person, to be master even of the deity's enlightenment. (1978:94)

Eliade has stated that

...the tantrist is concerned with *sādhana* ...; he wants to "realize" the paradox expressed in all the images and formulas concerning the union of opposites, he wants concrete, experimental knowledge of the state of non-duality. Tantrism ... attempts to "unify" [pairs of opposites] through techniques combining subtle physiology with meditation (1958:269).

Bharati also stresses that the tantric seeks to "experience" the resolution of this paradox; tantrism is unique by virtue of its quest for this *experience*, not its position that such resolution is intellectually possible and desirable. These primarily textual studies suggest that the importance of the sexual *sādhana* stems from the importance of the actual experience of non-duality, and the access to this experience which ritually controlled coitus can provide.

Newar tantric initiations exploit the power of this experience, at least in symbolic form, as an introduction to the difficult and dangerous method of *sādhana*. The value of this process, at least from the layman's point of view, if not the priest's as well, is its capacity to coerce divinities through identification and union with them. No explanation offered to me for any of the hundreds of rituals

involving *sādhana* which I witnessed included any reference to the mental state of the officiant except in so far as it related to his summoning of a deity, either for the purpose of devotion or coercion.⁴⁸ Though Vajrayana priests embrace enlightenment and release as goals in the abstract, they also invoke their ideal of the Bodhisattva. They envision the Bodhisattva not only as compassionate and concerned for those who are unenlightened, but also as one who is powerful and uses his powers for their benefit.

Ritual and ritual officiants play important roles in the lives of Newars, including those who are Buddhist, a fact which many have attributed to the influence of Hinduism in Nepal. Father Locke has convincingly argued that ritual has long been an integral part of the Buddhist tradition. Even the Buddha is quoted as having suggested the use of *mantras* for healing purposes (1980:67-72). The role of ritual and the power of the ritual specialist in the Newar context cannot be understood without some knowledge of tantra, a tradition which deliberately perpetuates its own obscurity. The most infamous aspect of tantric ritual, ritual copulation, is also its most meticulously obscured.

Though many have suggested that Newar Buddhists perform ritual for its own sake (Cf. Locke 1980:121), this is a gross over-simplification of the reasons these ritualists do what they do. As Stephan Beyer has noted in another context, "Buddhism is a performing art" (1978), and much of a priest's stature derives from

⁴⁸Locke observed the same attitude toward *sādhana* among the Kathmandu Vajracarya with whom he chose to work because their theological sophistication was at a higher level than that of their Bungamati confreres. He also noted the importance of a theoretical understanding of *sādhana* to the interpreter of these rituals. "Though...most of the present day practitioners do not go beyond the level of ritual performed to please or placate a god, the rituals of the Vajracaryas can only be understood if one realizes their original purpose in the acting out in ritual of the *sādhana*." (1980:121)

his capacity to perform rituals with convincing attention to detail. At the very least, the *Vajrācārya* engaged in ritual is exercising his power over laity, if not deities.

The avowed superiority of the Vajrayana path over the ascetic Theravada one is attributed to the former's directness and its compassion. The power and responsibilities which this path confers are not considered appropriate for everyone. Allen echoes the sentiments expressed in the *Bare chuyegu* initiation in explaining the apparently indulgent ways of the tantric.

Monastic Buddhism with all its vows and abstinances [sic] is the appropriate road to enlightenment for those of weak intellect. The vows protect the weak from the suffering that would otherwise result from attachment to sensory experience. Provided one has a strong intellect, or so argues the Vajrayana philosopher, there is no need at all to reject sensory experience; to do so merely gives it an exaggerated importance. On the contrary, the quickest and most effective way to gain enlightenment is to obliterate the self not by abstinence [sic] but by self indulgence (1975:13).

The Bodhisattva ideal and the objective of self-obliteration are integrated in Newar Buddhist ritual. Rituals are performed to assist others, often with benefit to the whole universe as a stated objective. These rituals which rely upon *sādhana* utilize "obliteration" as a means of achieving unity with, and therefore control over, powerful gods for the benefit of others. The omnipresence of deities in the Kathmandu valley is difficult to ignore, and the tantric initiate is said to actually experience a cultivated intimacy with these gods which provides him or her with privileged access to their power.

CHAPTER V

BUNGADYA: TANTRIC MASTER AND BODHISATTVA

Both Nepalese and foreign writers have, for centuries, attested to the importance of Bungadya and his annual festival. They have also used many different names to refer to this one god.¹ Dharmasvamin, a Tibetan monk who lived in the Kathmandu valley from 1226 to 1234, noted that "Arya Bu-kham" was well known in India (Dowman 1981:246-7). Bungadya's annual *rath jātrā* is the only festival which Dharmasvamin chose to record of the many he must have observed during his prolonged stay (Slusser 1982:370). Slusser suggests that by the thirteenth century Bungadya was well known in Tibet and considered to be one of the "...most esteemed manifestations of *Avalokiteśvara* among the thousands known in Nepal and Tibet" (Ibid.:371).

Many observers, both indigenous and foreign, have seen fit to compare the popularity of Bungadya in Nepal with that of Lord Pasupati² of Pasupatinath, one of the most revered Hindu shrines in the world and the most heavily endowed in Nepal.³ Slusser notes that "Srinivasa of Patan [1658-1684] ..., one of the most pious of Hindu kings, passed over Pasupati in his *praśasti* [panegyric] to declare himself the devotee of Matsyendranatha" (1984:74, citing Regmi 1966, pt.4:168-170). D.R. Regmi, one of the most prolific Nepali writers of Nepalese history, has stated that *Lokeśwar* known as Macchindra is one of the most commonly

¹The references cited here clearly pertain to the god of Bungamati. I have consistently used the term "Bungadya" throughout in order to avoid ambiguity; *Lokeśwar*, *Avalokiteśvara*, Karunamaya, and Matsyendranath are all epithets applied to more than one deity.

²An epithet of Shiva meaning "Lord of the Animals."

³See Regmi (1968 vol.4:15-16,78) concerning holdings of Pasupati.

respected deities of the Nepal Valley, ranking as high as Pasupatinātha in popular estimation as far as the followers of Vajrayana are concerned." (1965, pt.1:572) Gopal Singh Nepali, the first to produce an ethnography on the Newar, writes of Bungadya that "the Newars regard his festival as the greatest among their national festivals." (1965:316)

Early European observers also commented on the importance of Bungadya, often describing him as the "guardian deity of Nepal" (Wright 1972:34, originally pub. 1877). Sylvain Lévi observed at the turn of the century that both "Gourkas" and Newars participated in the festival of Bungadya, whatever their religious persuasion, for "Matsyendra Nātha est un trop gros personnage pour qu'on risque de provoquer ses rancunes." (1905, vol.2:44) Percival Landon simply noted twenty years later that "Machendra is the most notable deity of Nepal..." (1928:214).

The importance of Bungadya as revealed in the historical and ethnographic record raises many questions. How is it that this particular Bodhisattva⁴ came to be revered above all others? How did his many identities evolve? These questions have been addressed by Father Locke and others, and I will summarize their historical analyses at a later point. The fundamental question asked in this study is "Who is Bungadya *now*?" For the Newar, to identify Bungadya is to tell his story. After discussing the role of myth as explanation in Newar culture, I will introduce Bungadya in the Newar fashion with the story of his coming to Nepal.

⁴I have used the term "Bungadya" to refer to this god consistently for the sake of clarity. In this case Bungadya is not simply a Bodhisattva *per se*, but a god with many attributes, those of the Bodhisattva *Avalokiteśvara* among them.

Myth as Explanation in Newar Culture

The Newar refer to what western scholars often call myths to explain much of their culture. Questions concerning the meaning of a name, purpose of an event, rationale for a tradition, or the identity of a god are all likely to be answered in the form of a *bākhām*, or story, to which the teller is likely to attribute at least some historical validity. To explain a tradition is to reveal its origin.

As noted before, Nepalese *purāṇas*, *vaṃsāvalis*, and other texts tell of events spanning ages (*yuga*) measured in the tens of thousands of years. Newars often discuss past events in terms of the *yuga* in which they are said to have occurred, and the implications of living in the inauspicious *Kālī yuga* are often discussed.⁵ The notion that the indigenous Nepalese historical record begins in A.D. 464 is widely accepted by Nepali academics, but not among the general public. The apparent age of publicly read manuscripts (sometimes centuries old)⁶ which often describe events of past *yugas*, the general knowledge of the stories

⁵That some *Vajrācāryas* now perform rituals for impure castes, and that as many *majyupim* are seen bathing at the *ghats* at sunrise as Brahmins, are both cited as signs of the *Kālī yuga*. The relative impotence of contemporary tantric practitioners is also referred to as a consequence of the *Kālī yuga*, for in prior *yugas* tantric masters are said to have been capable of miraculous feats.

⁶Manuscripts are often displayed, and occasionally worshipped, as in the case of the *prajñāpāramitā*. This text plays a prominent role in the ritual cycles of both Tham Bahi in Kathmandu (cf. Locke 1987:408) and Kwa Baha in Patan (cf. Gellner 1987). The myth of origin of the Tham bahi text extends back to the time of Manjusri, who is said to have drained the valley of water, making it suitable for human habitation. Though this text primarily concerns metaphysical and doctrinal matters, they are often presented in the form of dialogue between master and apostle, and are therefore also referred to as a record of past events (cf. Mitra 1877:183-7). The *Gunakāraṇḍavyūha*, often read publicly by the *pānjus* in *pujās* for Bungadya, is an account of events which illustrate the virtues of Karunamaya.

told, and physical evidence (such as the overturned *cībā:s* at Vajrayogini),⁷ are all cited as reasons for lending what we call myths the authority of history.

The stories concerning the location of the *piku luku* representing Kumar at the threshold of homes and the origin of the form of *Hariharivāhana Lokeśwar* cited above typify the use of myth in explanation. This form of explanation often carries a secondary message, which enhances the status of the teller with respect to his or her village, neighborhood, caste, preferred deity, or professed faith. The myths told to explain the identity of Bungadya are no exception, and vary with respect to the identity of the teller.

Initially, I expected to devote much of my attention to variations in the myth of origin of the *jātrā* which tells of the coming of Bungadya to Nepal. I soon discovered that though there were many different ways of telling the story, most variations were attributable to elaboration or omission rather than differences in content. The same fundamental features were either included or excluded out of choice, not ignorance; most informants revealed that they knew of the features which they omitted if asked for elaboration.

The more interesting material lay in the explanations given for individuals' roles in the *jātrā*. In these myths, elements from the central myth of origin, other mythic traditions, and historical accounts would be woven into highly original narratives shared only by those that played the role explained. It soon became apparent that it made little sense to my informants for me to persist in soliciting essentially the same story from everyone, they would wonder how it was that I did

⁷Other examples of physical evidence of mythic events include the cracked *cībā:* in front of Cakwadya Baha, supposedly fractured by a *vajra* hurled by an angry Cakwadya (see below) and the hole in the road in Thatti, where the old man from Patan is said to have disappeared into the earth after having pronounced Patan as the appropriate place for Bungadya's temple.

not already know the story I asked about. Both my informants and I were far more interested in telling and hearing *their* stories which few others knew. These stories often form the basis for a claim to a present or former status which others do not acknowledge. It was important to my informants that I hear their stories to learn "the truth" about them and the *jātrā*.

Metamyth

With a few exceptions, the material in the myth recounted below is shared knowledge among the Newar of the Kathmandu valley; the basic themes are widely recognized, and only minute details are likely to be disputed.⁸ Some significant features, however, are subjects of debate, and alternate versions are noted in these cases. The most obvious and historically most important point of variation is the name used for the deity. I have used the name Karunamaya because this version explains how the epithet Bungadya came into being and because Karunamaya is commonly used in this context by Newars. Newars will, however, also use the name "Bungadya" and non-Newars will commonly use the appellation Matsyendranath in telling their version of this story.⁹ This is therefore a metamyth; it contains most of the components which are common knowledge, though it is unlikely that any one person would include all of the details given here unless

⁸I acknowledge the potential importance of the most minute detail in mythic analysis; the recording of the imagined often demands more precision than the recording of the observable. Because the purpose of this dissertation is largely comparative with respect to different social groups, I have chosen to concentrate on material which most clearly reflects social differentiation. The subtle mythological analysis pursued by Levi-Strauss in his "Mythologiques" is driven by the methodological necessity of isolating reflections of the mind from their social context, precisely the opposite of my intent.

⁹The significance of these alternate epithets will be discussed in detail below.

prodded to do so. This story is also summarised; I have not preserved the typical recitative style in this rendition for the sake of brevity.¹⁰

How Bungadya came to Nepal

During the reign of Narendradeva¹¹, Nepal suffered a terrible drought. For twelve years there was no rain, and rice husks contained no grain.¹² Narendradeva learned the cause of the drought from Bandhudatta [considered either a Buddhist *vajrācārya* or Hindu *ācārya*,¹³ depending on the persuasion of the teller], who told him that it was because the *nāga* serpent deities responsible for rainfall were being held captive by Gorakhnath.¹⁴

¹⁰Newars tell such stories largely in the form of dialogue among characters and soliloquy occurring within the mind of individual characters. In the latter instance the story teller recounts the inner thoughts of the individuals in the story, thereby including repetition which is useful for oral presentation but tedious in written form. Thus the first sentences might more typically be rendered, "Long ago, in the time of Narendradeva, for twelve years there was no rain. In the rice husk there was no rice grain. There was nothing to eat. Narendradeva wondered what to do. "What shall I do? There is no rain, how can I bring rain?"[he thought]. The version given here more closely resembles the narrative form used in popular Newar redactions of the *Gunakāruṇḍavyūha*, or Wright's *Vamsāvalī*, which is often quoted in the Nepalese newspapers as an authoritative source on Nepalese traditions.

¹¹In some versions, Narendradeva has passed the throne on to his son, Varadeva, in order that he may enter a monastery or become an ascetic wanderer; a mark of an exemplary king. His son, the successor to the throne, seeks his father to undertake the mission, either on his own initiative or acting on the advice of Bandhudatta. These versions refer to Narendradeva as the "*rāja*" though they do not stipulate that he had resumed the throne.

¹²"*Wa dunem jaki madu*," an expression commonly used to refer to calamitous times.

¹³Designation currently reserved for Hindu priests who engage in tantric rites. These rites, because of their polluting aspects, preclude Brahmins who wish to retain their caste.

¹⁴Gorakhnath's motive for doing this is attributed either to his anger at his poor reception in Nepal or his hope to compel his guru (Matsyendranath/Karunamaya) to come from his retreat so he could see him.

Bandhudatta informed the king that the only way to get Gorakhnath to release the *nāgas* was to bring his guru, [Matsyendranath/ Karunamaya], to Nepal from Kamarup.¹⁵ Narendradeva enlisted the assistance of Bandhudatta (a powerful tantric), and Lalita Jyapu [and his wife] to come with him on the expedition to bring Karunamaya back.

Shortly after setting out, Bandhudatta stepped on a serpent sleeping in the road which proved to be Karkotaka Naga Raja, a king of the serpent *nāga* deities, who rose in anger to tower over them and prevented them from passing. Bandhudatta expressed amazement at the *nāga*'s ability to grow so large, and asked the *nāga* to truly demonstrate his power by shrinking to a fraction of his former size. The *nāga* obliged Bandhudatta, whereupon the priest used his tantric power of *sādhana* to draw the *nāga* into a *kalaś* and trap him there. The *nāga* begged for release, which Bandhudatta granted after extracting the *nāga*'s promise that he would aid them in their quest.

Along the way they came to a river which would turn any creature which stepped into it to stone. Karkotaka stretched himself across the river to form a bridge over which the others could walk. The tip of his tail, however, slipped into the water, turned into stone, and fell off. This is the reason that *nāgas*¹⁶ have blunt tails.

Upon reaching Kamarup they encountered Karunamaya's demoness mother, who ruled over a kingdom of ghosts and malevolent spirits. Karunamaya was the youngest of her 500 sons, and the demoness queen was unwilling to part with him. Bandhudatta once again employed his tantric powers and, after asking the *nāga* to shrink himself, placed the *nāga* into the stomach of the king, whereupon the king fell ill.¹⁷ The king promised Bandhudatta a boon if he could cure him, which he did, but the mother would still not grant their request to take Karunamaya with them.

The queen, fearful that Karunamaya might leave against her will out of compassion for the people of Nepal, lay across the

¹⁵an archaic name for Assam. Some chronicles specify that "Matsyendranath" was in meditation on top of Mount Kapotala (Wright 1972:148).

¹⁶ Mere snakes have pointed tails, a distinction which is often discussed whenever a snake is seen. One of the major points of debate when several serpents were being worshipped in a short-lived *nāga* cult which developed in the winter of 1983 was the shape of their tails.

¹⁷This elaboration on the steps taken to trick the king and queen into releasing Karunamaya is often left out, as is the incident in which Karkotaka nagraj is compelled through Bandhudatta's trickery and tantric power to join the expedition. The first segment clearly lays the background for the second.

threshold of his room that night while she slept.¹⁸ Karunamaya carefully slipped out of the room guarded by his mother by moving her hair to one side while she slept (thereby avoiding stepping over her). However, he neglected to move one hair, so that his mother was angered not only by his disappearance, but by the insult she had been dealt, and thus enraged went in pursuit of her son's abductors.¹⁹ Bandhudatta became aware that the demoness was chasing them and decided to turn Karunamaya into a bee and draw him into a *kalaś* so that they might escape more readily.²⁰

In order to perform this ritual he required the assistance of the king, who was to close the top of the *kalaś* as soon as the bee flew in. Twice, during the long *pūjā* necessary to achieve this, the King fell asleep, and was not prepared to close the *kalaś* at the critical moment. The third time Bandhudatta attempted the *pūjā*, the King had again fallen asleep, so Bandhudatta nudged him with his foot to awaken him. This angered the King who thought to kill Bandhudatta but refrained, and succeeded in capturing the bee. The Queen caught up with them, however, and only agreed to allow the party to continue to Nepal if Karunamaya would be the guardian deity of the country, and if they would sow the seeds of *saḥ* trees along their way to show Karunamaya the path back home. Having agreed, both parties proceeded together toward the valley, and parted at its edge, with Bandhudatta and his party offering the queen and her retinue many gifts. Bandhudatta parched the seeds with a mantra so that they would not grow.

A procession then formed to enter the valley, which to the common man appeared to be accompanied by birds and other animals but which were in fact gods and goddess; four dogs carrying the *kalaś* were Bhairavas, and Mahadeva, Brahma, and Vishnu were all in attendance. When they reached one spot one of the dogs made the noise *bhu*, which was interpreted to mean that this spot

¹⁸To step over or physically place oneself above (*hācāṃgāye*) someone is extremely disrespectful. Newars pay careful attention while climbing the open staircases in their homes, lest they inadvertently *hācāṃgāye* someone. The cry "*Binābi!*" alerts anyone else who might be on the stairs below.

¹⁹Karunamaya is forcefully abducted from the perspective of his mother, who in some versions is worried about her son's compassion drawing him away, and in others is concerned simply with the trickery of Bandhudatta. It is the anger of the mother at the abduction which is stressed throughout the remainder of this myth and other related myths.

²⁰Some versions do not include the episode of the sleeping mother, but state that Matsyendranath was smuggled out of Kamarup in a *kalaś* in the form of a bee. The more elaborate version is well known, however, and portrayed in popular art and is included in the *Gunakāruṇḍavyūha* which is often read during *pūjās* for Bungadya.

was Karunamaya's birthplace, and that a temple should be built for him there.²¹ When the procession reached Gorakhnath,²² he rose out of respect for his *guru*, releasing the *nāgas* which then flew into the sky, causing rain to pour down.

The procession then proceeded to Patan, where Bandhudatta, Lalita Jyapu, and Narendradeva debated as to where a *rath jātrā* should be established for Karunamaya.²³ Narendradeva urged that his royal prerogative be honored, and that the god's *jātrā* be celebrated in Bhaktapur. Lalita Jyapu protested that he had done all the work, and that the god should therefore be honored in his town, Lalitpur (Patan). Bandhudatta, coming from Kathmandu, claimed that his tantric powers had made the mission a success, and that the god should therefore be taken in procession through Kathmandu.²⁴ It was decided that the matter should be decided by the oldest man in Patan²⁵.

²¹This refers to the site of Bungadya's Bungamati temple.

²²There is a shrine, all but consumed by a tree, devoted to Gorakhnath at the crest of the ridge just above Bungamati on the road to Patan. The people of Bungamati identify this as the spot where Gorakhnath imprisoned the Nagas. They also say that this ridge is the original location of Bungamati.

²³Some versions state that this debate concerned the location of another temple to be built for Karunamaya.

²⁴This association of the three protagonists in this debate with Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Patan may be a late innovation, reflecting, perhaps, the division of the valley into these three kingdoms in the fifteenth century. Current renditions of this story offered by the residents of Patan and Bungamati frequently refer to Narendradeva as the king of Bhaktapur. At the time of Narendradeva, it is unclear where the political center of the valley was, though Bhaktapur, with which he is linked, is an unlikely candidate (cf. Slusser 1982:124-26). However, some versions, including that recorded in Wright's chronicle, note that Narendradeva had abdicated his throne in order to go into retreat, and Wright's footnote indicates that the monastery in which the king had secluded himself was in Bhaktapur (1966:139, nt. 3). Wright's chronicle also states that there was no town where Bandhudatta lived; a notion consistent with the image of a *bhikṣu*, but inconsistent with the idea that Bandhudatta hailed from Kathmandu. The strengthening of the associations of these contenders with the three cities which is evident in current lore is consistent with the development of rivalry between the three kingdoms. This rivalry is often alluded to in other *rath jātrā* stories and customs.

²⁵Recall the prerogatives of the *thakāli*, or eldest member of a *saṃgha* or *guthī*.

Lalita Jyapu secretly advised the king of Patan of this plan, whereupon the king sent the oldest man a bowl of yogurt flavored with salt. Upon receiving the unexpected gift from the king, the old man wondered why he should have been honored with such a gift. When he tasted the salty yogurt, he realized that, having taken the king's salt, he was indebted to him, and that the king must therefore expect a special favor.²⁶ The old man was then asked to decide the matter of where the god's festival should be held. From atop a pile of seven wooden mortars, the oldest man announced that the god should stay in Patan, whereupon the entire pile of mortars and the old man were swallowed up by the earth. Though the onlookers realized that the old man must not have been telling the truth, they decided to comply with his verdict nonetheless.

After this had all been decided, Bandhudatta declared that there was still some unfinished business, for when he had nudged the king with his foot the King had, in his anger, silently vowed to kill Bandhudatta. Bandhudatta insisted that the king fulfill his vow. Horrified, the king protested, and said that he was sorry that he had ever thought such a thing, but Bandhudatta was adamant. Finally they agreed that the King would strike the head off of a rice doll made in the image of Bandhudatta. But, just as the king brought his sword down on the doll's neck, Bandhudatta entered the doll and was killed, and instantly merged²⁷ with Karunamaya's right foot. The King, grief stricken at what he had done, died on the spot and merged into the left foot of the god. Lalita jyapu, saddened by the demise of Bandhudatta and Narendradeva, also gave up his life and merged into the seat of the god.

This myth or portions of it are referred to in explanations of the importance of Bungadya (he brings rain and inspired the ultimately fatal devotion of the king), the popular name of the god (after the village founded at the spot the Bhairab/dog said "bhu"), the dual residences of the god (Patan and Bungamati), the origin of the *rath jātrā*, and so forth. Several major points are central to understanding fundamental dynamics which are reiterated in the *jātrā* and the other myths associated with it: 1) The god was, in essence, stolen from his demoness mother.

²⁶The notion of "having taken one's salt" entailing social obligation is common all through Asia and beyond and is mentioned in the Bible. The Newar reiterate this theme when they inquire about the food they offer to guests in their homes. Rather than ask if it is good, or if you like it, they are far more likely to ask if there is enough salt in it (*ci ga la?*).

²⁷The Newari term for this process is "*līn juye*."

2) A *nāga*, priest, king, and *jyapu* were instrumental in bringing the god to Nepal. 3) The present location of the festival and temple in Patan is the result of a dispute between representatives of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur. 4) All of those who were most instrumental in bringing the god to Nepal ultimately achieved maximal proximity with Bungadya; they merged with him out of conflict among themselves. Other themes presented in this abbreviated metamyth will emerge as significant as the *jātrā* is described in detail.

The Image of Bungadya

How the Image was Made

The *Śākya* of I Bahi, located in the northern part of Patan, claim that it was their ancestors who crafted the image into which the spirit of Bungadya was placed. Wright's *Vaṃsāvali* substantiates this claim;

The audience, being contented with the decision [to locate Karunamaya in Patan], went to the *bihar* in which Sunyasri Misra once lived as a *bhikṣu*,²⁸ and as they considered it a very sacred spot, they performed a *purascārāṇa*²⁹ at a place called Chobhu. [Cobaha ?] Then, taking possession of one-third of the bihar which was built by Sunyasri Misra, they caused an image to be made of Aryavalokiteswara-Machchhindranatha (sic). This image, after consecration, they took to Amarapur [Bungamati], and worshipped it; and after the spirit of the god, brought from Kapotai mountain in the *kalaś*, was transferred to the image. This image was made of earth brought from the Hmayapido mound.³⁰ (Wright 1972: 148-9)

The I Bahi *Śākyas* also claim that originally the god was kept in their *bahī*. They substantiate the logic of this claim by noting that I Bahi is far older than Ta Baha

²⁸Locke (1985:202-3) provides the story of the founding of I Bahi by Sunyasri Misra.

²⁹recitation of mantras in order to attain some object

³⁰Mhaipi ajima, a small hillock-top shrine on the east bank of the Vishnumati near Balaju, from which clay is still collected to renew the image.

and located closer to the center of Patan. One point which they use to illustrate their connection with Bungadya is that they used to be called to perform the *pānista pujās*³¹ required whenever the *rath* broke down during the *rath jātrā*.

It is true that the Patan temple of Bungadya which is located in Ta Baha is considered a late addition, and not really part of Ta Baha properly speaking. Ta Baha has its own *kwapa dyā:* and *agam dyā:*, and its *saṃgha* has nothing to do with the worship of Bungadya. Locke mentions a tradition that Ta Baha was moved at the time of the erection of Bungadya's temple to its present site, and notes that Ta Baha *saṃgha* members perform *Bare chuyegu* at the site of the original *bāhā*.³² The expanded courtyard of Ta Baha is unusual, suggesting either that earlier structures may have been removed to accomodate a later intruder,³³ or that special innovations were necessary in creating the new *bāhā* in order to accomodate the thousands of worshippers who assemble there.³⁴ Whatever

³¹A rite of consecration, especially that used to rectify a problem or to begin anew. One informant stated that this term derived from the Sanskrit (*pratisthāpana puja*, which can be rendered as a "rite for establishment," but I could not further substantiate this derivation.

³²Bhelakhu Baha; *bare chuyegu* was performed at this Baha in 1984 and the initiants then brought to Ta Baha as Locke describes (1987:137).

³³This is certainly reflected in an account of the earthquake of 1934 given to me by one of the elders of the Ta Baha *saṃgha*. As if to indicate the primacy of the *bāhā* as opposed to the temple of Bungadya, this elderly *Vajrācārya* proudly recounted how the earthquake totally destroyed the temple of Bungadya, but spared the *āgam* which is precariously situated over an archway entrance to the Bahal. It should also be noted that this *Vajrācārya* is one of the principal priests for the annual *jātrā* at Cobaha, and claims that Cobahadya predates the coming of Bungadya.

³⁴Wright's chronicle goes on to state that "The image of the deity was brought from Amarapur, when the sun was in the northern hemisphere, and kept in a temple built in Tau Bihar" (1972:149). Locke also supports this theory of the *bāhā* existing prior to Bungadya's arrival in his earlier writing (1980:253).

further historical investigation may reveal, it is typical that the theme of vying for the presence of Bungadya, first articulated between distant countries, then nearby cities, is repeated within the confines of Patan.

Physical Characteristics of the Image

The image of Bungadya is slightly over three feet high, with silver arms and feet protruding from a relatively formless standing body. The outermost layers of the torso and head clearly consist of caked paint and clay.³⁵ The arms conform to the iconographic conventions used to portray *Padmapāṇi Lokeśwar*. The right hand is in the *varada mudrā*³⁶ and though the required lotus is missing from the left hand, it could clearly accomodate one if held in the conventional fashion. It is unclear if the clay applied each year has accumulated to the point of obscuring a complete silver image within, as suggested by an eleventh century description of the figure as "...the standard Padmapani Lokeswar" (Locke 1980:300). Dharmasvamin, in his thirteenth century account, states that the body is made of wood "in the aspect of a five-year old boy".³⁷ The youthfulness of the image he

³⁵For reasons which are unclear, thus far the descriptions of the image in the literature have been vague and largely based on secondary sources. Locke claims that the unclothed image cannot be seen by anyone but the initiated *Niyekhu* painters (1980:254). To my knowledge there has never been any such restriction. Full view of the image is provided throughout the painting process through the doors on the east side of the temple which admit the light necessary for painting. There was no reluctance in 1982-4 on the part of either the *pānju* attendants or the *Niyekhu* painters to allow me to take detailed photographs of the image at every stage of the five-day process, including the cleaning in which the image's features are completely obliterated. By-passers frequently paused to watch, as did the ubiquitous children of the neighborhood.

³⁶"The gesture of hands shown by gods while conferring boons."
(Bhattacharyya 1968:441,426 fig.104(a))

³⁷George Roerich, ed. and trans., *Biography of Dharmasvamin*. Patna 1959, p. 54-5 as cited by Locke (1980:300). Dowman (1981:247) cites Locke as suggesting that the arms are "detachable," though I cannot locate such a

describes is consistent with Bungadya's identity as the youngest of 500 sons. If some part of the current image is wooden, it is covered with clay and silver appendages have been attached. Both the *pānjus* and *Niyekhus* who come into close contact with the image claim that a *kalaś* containing either a buzzing bee or sloshing water is enclosed within the image and can (or could once) be heard. It is doubtful that the figure within the clay (if there is one) is of solid gold (as some *pānjus* evidently suggested to Locke), for one person can carry the image.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the image is its head. It has a protruding forehead, large eyes, and diminutive nose and mouth, the latter two suggested only by dots and thin black lines. This odd-shaped head is clearly considered distinctive, and is mimicked in other representations of Bungadya in order to distinguish them from other *Lokeśwar*s.³⁸ The protruding forehead may be attributable to the accumulation of thin pieces of gold which are applied on his forehead each year in the course of Bungadya's *ācā: luyegu*.

One aspect of the image which is shared by all five of the principal *Lokeśwar* in the valley is the importance of its feet in daily worship and processions. When a devotee comes to make an offering to Bungadya, the attendant lifts a silver box-like cover to reveal Bungadya's feet, and dabs a bit of vermillion from the feet onto a leaf or flower to offer the devotee as *prasād*. I have

statement in any of Locke's work. It is true that they are not rigidly attached, but this may be the result of the numerous mishaps Bungadya has suffered during his many *rath jatrās*.

³⁸The bas relief tympana formerly located over the eastern entrance to Ta Baha typified this form (pointed out to me by Ian Alsop before it collapsed in a rainstorm in 1983), as does the interior tympanum of the south entrance to Nag Bahal. Also, see Slusser (1984:vol 2, pl.595) for earlier examples. Cobahadya is the only other *Lokeśwar* in the valley with such distorted facial features, though representations of the two can be readily distinguished due to Cobahadya's upward gazing eyes.

often seen a worshipper insist upon viewing the feet and receiving *prasād* from them.³⁹ Whenever the god is moved a representative of the Malla king wears the silver foot cover, which is simply referred to as "the god's feet" in this context, on top of his head, a sign of both obeissance and intimacy.⁴⁰

Though the image itself is relatively simple, its adornment is remarkably complex, comprising in sum a virtually complete collection of every decorative article any god or mortal, male or female, might ever wear. Though a complete inventory is beyond the scope of this enterprise, several items clearly reflect the multivalence of the image.

Bungadya wears a crown of the kind typically worn by incarnations of *Avalokiteśvara*⁴¹ though it lacks the usual figure of Amitabha.⁴² Though this sort of crown may have also once been the emblem of mortal kings,⁴³ the *kikimpā* which top it are exclusively presented as gifts to gods, albeit gods of all kinds,

³⁹The fourteenth century Malla king Jyoti Malla declared himself to be "laden with the dust of Lord Pasupati's lotus feet" (*Pāśupaticarana kamal dhūli dhūsarita*) (Slusser 1982:228), a description which, save for the deity concerned, applies to the devotee of Bungadya who puts a leaf laden with *sindur* powder on his head.

⁴⁰The focus on Bungadya's feet parallels the Kanphata yogis' practice of worshipping the feet of Gorakhnath, their guru and Matsyendrath's disciple, at Pashupati. They say that this practice started in the thirteenth century after the image was destroyed in the raids of Shamsruddin, leaving only the feet behind. Among the earliest icons associated with the Buddha were images of his feet.

⁴¹This crown is worn by many different deities, Slusser's claims to the contrary notwithstanding (1984:p.462). The image of Manjunath which Slusser illustrates a few pages later wears a crown remarkably like that of Bungadya (ibid:pl.474,475).

⁴²The *Dhyānī* (meditation) Buddha from which *Avalokiteśvara* is said to have emanated.

⁴³The first known reference to Bungadya states that a King Balarjunadeva gave his crown to Bugma Lokesvara (see below).

including *digu dyā*: as noted above. Bungadya, even when stripped of most of his garments for his ceremonial bathing, keeps a *jana* (Nep. *janaī*), or sacred thread worn by twice-born Hindus, which is otherwise unseen. The garments which normally conceal the *jana* are offered each year by devotees, and include traditional Newar shirts, some of fine silks, others of the inexpensive hand-blocked cotton, tailored to fit Bungadya's unusual shape. Bungadya also wears a silver repoussé snake around his neck, explained by yet another myth which links him with *nāgas* and water. Much of the jewelry is distinctively feminine, including the heavy silver chain typically worn by *jyāpu* women, as well as jewelry worn by Newar brides.

In the course of Bungadya's annual initiations, which follow the re-painting, the god is adorned with all the ritual paraphernalia appropriate to both male and female humans. This bisexuality is often referred to by Newars. The feminine aspect of the god is marked in the common Newari metonymic term for the god's annual life cycle rites. They refer to this long series of male and female rituals, collectively known as the *daśa karma puṣā*, as *lhi yayegu*; the ritual marriage of a young girl. Bungadya is thus adorned (and adored) as both Hindu and Buddhist, male and female.⁴⁴ The sexual identity of Bungadya will be discussed at length in Chapter VIII. We now turn to a discussion of the evolution of Bungadya's identity as both Hindu Mahasiddha and Buddhist Bodhisattva.

⁴⁴In Newari, the third person pronouns have no gender, thus obviating the problem posed by an individual or god whose gender is unknown or ambiguous. I have used "he" in reference to Bungadya because Newars speak of Bungadya as "also being a woman" rather than the other way around. They also speak of Bungadya as having a female consort, and tell stories of his philandery with women.

Bungadya as Padmapani Lokeswar and Matsyendranath: An Historical Perspective

The question of the evolution of the identities of Bungadya as *Padmapāṇi Lokēśwar* or *Avalokiteśvara* and Matsyendranath, is the focus of the extensive work of Father John Locke (1980) whose diachronic analysis has provided much of the basis for my fundamentally synchronic ethnographic approach. I will do no more than briefly summarise his conclusions, so as to place the evolution of these primary identities within a socio-political context. Father Locke concludes that the deity "...is in reality the bodhisattva Padmapani Lokesvara or Avalokitesvara" (1980:445); a conclusion which ignores the central issue of this study (i.e. Whose reality?) but which is an answer to the question of which identity preceded the other.

Locke describes the issue of whether the god existed in some other form prior to assuming the identity of *Avalokiteśvara* as moot. Some factors which raise this question include the amorphous shape of the image's torso and the god's name. Though it is true, as Locke points out, that many famous deities have local names, such as Cakwadya (*ānandādi Lokēśwar* and Janmadya (*Padmapāṇi Lokēśwar* which do not imply a former alternate identity, these names do often refer to myths of origin or some other characteristic of the god (as in both of these examples).⁴⁵ The name "Bungadya", in addition to conceivably having been derived from the word "bu," or "birthplace, as specified in Wright's *Vaṃsāvali*

⁴⁵Cakwadya is derived from its site having been determined by a sparrow (*cakunca*), Janmadya is derived from the name of the place of the discovery of the image in Jamal.

(1972:146), is also commonly derived from the word *bumga*:⁴⁶, meaning "watering hole," "spring," or "watering place" (Manandhar 1986:181, Shresthacarya 1987:219).⁴⁷ Bungadya has numerous important mythological, historical, and contemporary ritual associations with water, including annual *pujās* in which his spirit is drawn from a river.⁴⁸ These associations suggest that the theory of Bungadya being a primordial rain god which was later identified with the benevolent *Avalokiteśvara* bear further consideration in another venue.⁴⁹

Though there is no definitive corroborating evidence to support the claim, Locke sees no reason to doubt that Bungadya's *jātrā* began in the seventh century in the time of Narendradeva (1980:447).⁵⁰ The historical record regarding Bungadya begins with a reference to "Bungma Lokesvara" which predates the reign of Gunakamadeva, who was ruling in A.D. 984 (Locke 1980:300).⁵¹ An

⁴⁶Phonetically, Bungadya is spelled *bumgadya*:, the "m" indicating a nasalization of the "u" rather than the conjunct "ng" which is used in the popular romanization. The colon is used to indicate a prolonged or aspirated short "a" sound, and is actually used in Newari written in *devanagari* script.

⁴⁷Nepali (1965:318) offers this second derivation, as did several informants from Bungamati. The "bu" derivation offered in Wright's *vamcavali* strikes me as a typical ex-post-facto etymological rationalization, rather than an ancient enduring part of the myth.

⁴⁸This is done for all four *Lokeśvars*, see below and the Appendix, "Kotwal daha puja".

⁴⁹This is the theory suggested by Levi (1905:349-50) and Slusser (1982:67).

⁵⁰There are several possible candidates for this Narendradeva, one from the seventh, another from the tenth, and a third from the twelfth century. The chronicles point to the first of these who ruled from A.D. 643-679 (Locke 1980:297; dates, Slusser 1982:397).

⁵¹*Lokeśwar* ("Lord of the World") is conveniently ambiguous in that it is often applied to Shiva. In the references here it is clear that it refers to *Avalokiteśvara* ("Lord who looks all around the world" [for sentient beings in need of enlightenment]). Current usage among the Newars of Patan and Bungamati, at

eleventh century manuscript which refers to the god as "Bugama Lokesvara" and specifies it to be "a figure of the standard Padmapani Lokesvara" has already been cited. The cult of *Padmapāi Avalokiteśvara* was established in the Kathmandu valley by the fifth century (Ibid:447). It is not until the reign of Srinivasa Malla of Patan (1661-1684)⁵² that the first reference to this god as Matsyendranath is recorded (Ibid:405).⁵³

Locke states that Matsyendranath was probably an historical figure who lived in Bengal in the tenth century, and is likely to have spent extended periods in Assam; at that time a "...a tantric country par excellence." (1980:424)⁵⁴ His disciple, Gorakhnath, is generally considered to be an historical figure who lived sometime between the ninth and eleventh centuries (Briggs 1938:250, Locke 1980:428). Matsyendranath is revered as the founder of the Kaula or Yoginikaula School of yoga; a Saivite school which "...explained the philosophical elements of its doctrine in terms of Siva-Sakti" and which doctrine had much in common with Buddhist mysticism (Locke 1980:431). The fundamental tenet of Vajrayana Buddhism, that enlightenment can be attained through yogic practices and the development of mental powers, was shared by those of the school of Matsyendranath.

least, of "*Lokeśwar*" is usually limited to reference to incarnations of *Avalokiteśvara* unless otherwise modified. "*Maheśwar*" and "*Mahādyā*:" are the most commonly used epithets for Lord Shiva.

⁵²approximated dates of reign (Slusser:1982:401)

⁵³According to Regmi (1965 pt.1:573) Lokeswar is identified with Matsyendra in the fourteenth century, but he supplies no reference which might support this contention.

⁵⁴Bharati (1975:238) describes Matsyendranath as the "... semi-historical father of Hatha Yoga."

The doctrines of this school were known in Nepal by the beginning of the seventeenth century, at which time many Saivite sects of yogis were present in the valley (Locke 1980:432). Some of these sects recognized Matsyendranath as a particularly powerful *siddha*,⁵⁵ or one who has attained perfection in a tantric rite and has "acquired supernatural powers" (Bhattacharyya 1968:439). Locke suggests that the followers of Matsyendranath were probably first to recognize him in Bungadya, and proposes the following scenario to explain the popularization of this recognition.

If some yogis had taken to worshipping Avalokitesvara -Bungadya: as Matsyendranath, it would have been natural for the Natha Yogis to follow suit and for the Malla kings, Saivites and rulers by the favour of Pasupatinath, to make it official and begin to use the name Matsyendranath in inscriptions and have a Brahman from Banares write a poem in praise of Matsyendranath-Siva. The deity could then be worshipped by all - by the Buddhists as Lokesvara, by the yogis as Matsyendranath, by the court and the Saivites in general as Siva (Matsyendranath). This is what happened and Bunga-dya: became the national deity of the late Malla kingdom of Patan. (1980:438)

It is clear from the early accounts of Dharmaswamin that Bungadya was already accorded considerable status at least four centuries prior to the identification of Bungadya with Matsyendranath. Royal support is mentioned in the earliest reference to Bungadya from the tenth century (Locke 1980:300). Thus, Locke's statement that "...Bungadya became the national deity of the late Malla kingdom of Patan" seems odd; myth and history would seem to suggest that the god had been elevated to this status much earlier. However, several myths suggest that Siddhinarasimha Malla (1619-1661), who became a conspicuous

⁵⁵Locke describes a *siddha* as one who has attained "...power over his own body, physical forces and even the gods,..." (1980:420). Matsyendranath is listed as the first of eighty-four *Siddhas* in most texts which enumerate them, Gorakhnath generally being listed second as his disciple (1980:422).

supporter of Bungadya, was converted from indifference in the early part of his reign.⁵⁶

To suggest that it was "natural" for the Malla kings to identify Bungadya with Matsyendranath implies that the Nathic yogis had a profound influence over the Malla kings. At least two pieces of historical evidence support this proposition. The Maru Sata, also known as the Kasthamandapma (from which Kathmandu takes its name), is prominently situated in the center of Kathmandu. In the fourteenth century this became a rest house (*sata*) of the Kanphata yogis⁵⁷ and a temple of Gorakhnath, their deified original guru (cf. Briggs 1938:228-29). Eventually the yogis were able to assert their right of ownership of the *sata*, a right which was abrogated only in 1966 when the structure was restored (Unbescheid 1980:194). Direct royal patronage of these yogis was established at least as early as the second half of the seventeenth century when Srinivasa Malla established a *guthī* to support a *cākra puṣā* to be performed by the yogis at Bungadya's temple just before the *rath jātrā* each year.⁵⁸

The conquest of the Kathmandu valley by Prithvinarayan Shah brings Gorakhnath to a new level of importance in the recorded stories of the coming of Bungadya/Matsyendranath to Nepal. Gorakhnath was the patron deity of the Gorkha kingdom, and is still acknowledged as a patron of the modern state of Nepal. It is only with the Gorkhali conquest that Gorakhnath is connected with the legend of the origin of Bungadya and his *jātrā*. Earlier versions do not

⁵⁶See below regarding the myth of origin of the Rajopadhyay role in the *rath jātrā*.

⁵⁷The Kanphata ("slit-ear") yogis, named for the large slit made in their ears to accomodate massive earrings, are the dominant sect of *nāth* yogis in Nepal.

⁵⁸These *puṣās* are still performed by the Kanphata yogis.

mention Gorakhnath as the cause of the valley's drought (Locke 1980:441). The patron deity of the Gorkhas has, however, been woven into the mythic tradition passed on by the descendants of those whom the Gorkhas conquered. For the Gorkhalis to have asserted the primacy of the disciple over the guru would clearly have been absurd as well as counter-productive; the Shah dynasty kings have always honored Matsyendranath far more conspicuously than Gorakhnath. Prithvinyan Shah, who so cleverly accepted a *tika* from the incarnate tutelary divinity of the Malla Kings upon entering Kathmandu during Indra Jatra, knew the value of honoring deities who were powerful in the minds of those over whom he was to rule.

The popular identification of *Avalokiteśvara* with Matsyendranath "... is peculiar to Nepal." (Locke 1980:437)⁵⁹ This unique confluence of identities may be attributable to several key factors: 1. Important doctrines and ritual practices were shared by the yogis and the *Vajrācārya* attendants of Bungadya. 2. One particular *Avalokiteśvara* popularly known as Bungadya, enjoyed immense popularity and was respected as powerful and capable of assuming many different forms. His power to bring rain, peculiar to Bungadya among the *Lokeśvars* of the valley, elevated him to a stature of particular importance for the predominantly agriculturalist population of the valley. 3. The politico-religious importance of the *nāth* yogis due, in part, to their association with Shiva and subsequently with Gorakhnath lent their interpretations and practices legitimacy from the perspective of the Shah kings.

⁵⁹Though see Jaini (1980:87, 90-91; note 27) concerning the identification of Shiva with Boddhisattva Manjusri and possibly Matsyendranath in eleventh century Karnataka.

The status of Gorakhnath in the Gorkha kingdom only served to perpetuate and accentuate the importance of Bungadya under the Shah dynasty which conquered the valley and continues to rule today. The Kanphata yogis, as disciples of Gorakhnath, appear to have maintained considerable political influence in contemporary Nepal.⁶⁰ These yogis have recently erected a shrine to Matsyendranath, their guru's guru, in the form of a sculpture located at the entrance of their cloister headquarters at Pashupati. The image they erected and inscribed with the name Matsyendranath is an iconographically conventional stone sculpture of *Padmapāṇi Lokeśwar*. In view of the strident Hindu orthodoxy espoused by their leader, it seems all the more remarkable that the Kanphata yogis would use such a clearly "Buddhist" image to portray the founder of their sect, a Saivite *siddha*. Once again we are left to reconsider our notions of what is "Hindu" and what is "Buddhist"; not in the face of confusion, but rather a clearer vision than conventional wisdom provides.

The Contemporary Identities of Bungadya

The name "Matsyendranath" (usually pronounced "Macchendranath"), is used principally by non-Newar Nepalis to refer to Bungadya. Non-Newars are unlikely to call the god Bungadya or Karunamaya, the names most commonly used by Newars. Newars, however, are likely to acknowledge that Bungadya is "also Matsyendranath," and even occasionally use this name in recalling certain

⁶⁰See Unbescheidt (1980) for a discussion of the influence which the Kanphatas have exerted over other rulers in Nepal and elsewhere in the subcontinent.

stories.⁶¹ Bungadya, Karunamaya and Matsyendranath are the names most likely to be used in casual reference to the deity. His identity as *Padmapāṇi Lokeśwar* or *Avalokiteśvara* is widely known among the Bāre and others with special interest in the god who are Buddhists, but these names are never used in casual reference; they are more likely to be mentioned in detailed discussions about the god's identity.

Such discussions constitute an opportunity to expound personal theories which are highly individualized. These theories are often based, however, on popular myths which tell of Bungadya assuming other forms, such as that of Krishna. Newars who explicitly identify themselves as Hindu are more likely to regard this kind of evidence as grounds for proposing an alternative "real", or "fundamental" identity for Bungadya (or Matsyendranath).⁶² Both Hindus and Buddhists are likely to identify Bungadya with the major deities of the Hindu Pantheon. Three decorative panels (*lhusa*) located below the sanctum of Bungadya's chariot, clearly refer to this all-encompassing characteristic of Bungadya and are often pointed out by Hindu and Buddhist Newars alike. These conspicuous gilded brass repoussé panels each feature seven cast figurines of the *vāhanas* of Brahma (the swan), Vishnu (the *garuda*), and Maheswar (the bull).⁶³

⁶¹Even Newars, when telling stories involving Bungadya which elaborate on the role of Gorakhnath, occasionally use the term Matsyendranath.

⁶²Some of these proposed identities were eccentric, such as *Sūrdyā*: (the god of the sun) as proposed by a *Rājopadhyāy* priest. His contention was based on the fact that a small image of *Sūrdyā*: is placed in the *baymwa*: at the top of the *rath*.

⁶³Unfortunately, these panels bear no inscriptions which might date them. Slusser (1982:372) notes a seventeenth century painting which depicts Bungadya standing on these three *vāhanas*. Locke (1980:266-67) states that a horse, the *vāhana* of *Sūrdyā*:, is also included. I found none in my inventory of the *rath lhusa*. There is, in any case, no place on the *rath* which the horse

They are popularly interpreted as signifying that Bungadya embodies these three most important gods of the Hindu pantheon, for he too sits upon their vehicles.⁶⁴

As Locke has noted, the two most significant features of *Avalokiteśvara* are his compassion and his capacity to assume whatever form might be required by those who are in need of him (1980:408). *Padmapāṇi Lokeśwar* is an alternate epithet for *Avalokiteśvara* as well as one of 108 forms which *Avalokiteśvara* may take. The existence of 108 *Lokeśvars* as they are usually called, is common knowledge among the Buddhist lay population.⁶⁵ These numerous iconographically standardized forms of *Avalokiteśvara* were probably born of individualized *sādhana* visualizations created according to the needs of particular adepts, a process which has probably contributed to the profusion of deities recognized in Nepal and elsewhere on the sub-continent (cf. Bharati 1975:20). *Avalokiteśvara* is said to have also assumed human and other animal forms in order to come to the aid of those in need. As we shall see, the identities of Mastyendranath and *Avalokiteśvara* merge in myth precisely through this convention.

vāhanas, if they formerly existed, could occupy a location equivalent to those presently occupied by the *vāhanas* of the famous Hindu triad.

⁶⁴This feature is used by some to rationalize their devotion to a god with many "Buddhist" characteristics (attended to by Buddhists etc.) and by others to illustrate that the stature of Bungadya is on a par with these other deities, if not superior to them.

⁶⁵The most prominent display of these many incarnations is in Jana Baha where paintings of all 108 are displayed around the temple of Jamadya. These paintings are the basis of a recently published Newari book which identifies each of these incarnations with drawings based on these pictures (A. Bajracharya:1066) as well as the basis of the illustrations in the classic reference on Buddhist iconography by B. Bhattacharya (1958). Another list includes 360 incarnations, one for each day of the year (Locke 1980).

The Five *Lokeśwars* of the Four Places: *Pengu Teye Lokeśwar*

There are seven gods in the Kathmandu valley which are publicly venerated as Matsyendranath and identified as *Lokeśwars* by the Newar Buddhists.⁶⁶ There are uncounted thousands of gods venerated as *Lokeśwars* (Bodhisattvas) in the valley, but only these seven are also honored as Matsyendranath. Of these seven, five are well known outside of their localities: Cobahadya of Chobar, Bungadya of Bungamati and Patan, Janmadya of Kathmandu, Cakwadya of Patan, and Naladya of Nala.⁶⁷ Four of these popular *Lokeśwars* are referred to as the "*pengu teye Lokeśwar* ("*Lokeśwars* of the four places").⁶⁸ As might be expected, exactly which four of these five one considers to be among the *pengu teye Lokeśwars* varies according to where one lives.

Many Newar residents of Patan and Bungamati regard the Kathmandu *Lokeśwar* and his chariot festival as late imitations inspired by Bungadya. Historical data and legends support this notion. The Kathmandu *jātrā* was probably initiated as a consequence of the division of the valley into three independent kingdoms. Wright's *Vamsāvali* includes the following account, which is consistent with most other evidence.

⁶⁶In addition to the five listed below, this figure includes Annapurna Lokeswar of Bhaktapur and the red Matsyendranath of Thimi. There is in addition a famous Matsyendranath in Dolakha, located approximately 75 km. due east of Kathmandu, known as "Buga-dya.

⁶⁷A formerly independant minor kingdom which is in the Banepa valley just east of the Kathmandu valley proper.

⁶⁸As noted in the introduction, major deities are frequently conceptualized as having four major incarnations in the valley. Four major shrines are generally recognized for Ganesh (Karjebinayak in Bungamati, Maru Ganesh in Kathmandu, Surjyebinayak near Bhaktapur, and Jalabinayak in Cobar) as well as for Bhairav and Bhimsen, for example.

In this reign [of Yaksamalla, 1429-1472] some potters, while digging for clay, found an image of Lokeswara, which had been made by Guna-kama-deva raja⁶⁹, but which had been buried under the ruins of the temple that fell down in the time of the Thakuri Rajas. The Raja got the image repaired, and put it into a new temple, which he built for it in Kathmandu. The image henceforth was named Yamaleswara and the place where it was dug up was called Yamala.⁷⁰ (Wright 1972:189)

Those who do not consider Janmadya to be one of the *pengu taye Lokeswars* name Cakwadya, also popularly known as Minnath and identified by his attendants as *Jatādhāri Lokeswar* ("Lokeswar with the matted hair of an ascetic"), as the rightful bearer of this distinction in Janmadya's stead.

Bungadya and Cakwadya: Matsyendranath and Minnath

Local folklore and a modern edition of an undated chronicle concerning Cakwadya⁷¹ assert that, at the time of the arrival of Bungadya in the valley, seven (or twelve) other chariot processions were being observed. The attendants to both Bungadya and Cakwadya told me stories which agreed on the following major points. The other gods who had formerly been honored by *rath jātrās*, with the exception of Cakwadya, agreed to be absorbed into Bungadya and cease their own *rath jātrās*. Cakwadya was so angered when this was proposed to him that he hurled his *vajra*, striking and cracking a *cibā*: outside his temple. Because of his refusal to give up his own *jātrā*, Cakwadya's *rath jātrā* continues to be observed in conjunction with that of Bungadya. The *cibā*: which Cakwadya is said to have cracked is located outside Tanga Baha and is still pointed out as evidence of Cakwadya's wrath, power, and historical precedence over Bungadya.

⁶⁹Two dated documents place Gunakamadeva at the end of the tenth century (Slusser 1982:398).

⁷⁰Now known as Jamala, or Jamal.

⁷¹Minnathko Vamsavali. by Nhucheraaj Vajracarya, B.S. 2029.

The names Minnath and Matsyendranath are technically synonymous, though they are always used by the Nepalese to refer to different gods, the former being used exclusively to refer to Cakwadya. Tucci states that, "Many ascetics were called Matsyendranath or Minnath, "lord of the fish" - equivalent to "master of senses," and indicating that they had finally achieved control over their senses"; a mastery required to achieve the powers of a Siddha (1969:62-73).

The stories most often told by Newars and non-Newars alike to account for Matsyendranath's name relate that Matsyendranath, in the form of a fish, overheard Shiva recounting yogic teachings to his wife, Parvati. Parvati dozed off, so in order to encourage Shiva to continue, the fish played the responsive role of Parvati. Shiva came to know of this subterfuge, became angry, and demanded that whoever had impersonated his wife reveal himself. When the fish revealed its true identity, Shiva bowed before him. These basic elements are all found in most written chronicles and oral renditions offered by both Buddhists and Hindus. Buddhists, however, are likely to identify Shiva's teacher as *Avalokiteśvara* and to state that it was *Avalokiteśvara* who assumed the form of the fish in order to overhear his student.⁷²

⁷²This form is also given in Wright's *vamsāvali*. This version relates this story of the fish to the origin of the Pancadhyāna Buddhas. *Avalokiteśvara* is conceived of as the emanation of Amitabha Buddha, one of the *Pancadhyāni* Buddhas, or meditation Buddhas, who are the products of *sādhana*s undertaken by the primordial Adhi Buddha. The chronicle states that Adi Buddha named Padmapani Bodhisattva "Lokeswara, ... and gave him the duty of creating the world. He then created Brahma and other gods; and because he sat in Sukhavati-bhuvana, and watched attentively Brahma and the other gods, to ensure their protection, he was called Aryavalokiteswara Padma-pani Bodhisattva. This Buddha went from Sukhavati to a place called Banga (sic), where Siva came to learn from him Yog-gyana (i.e. union with the supreme being by means of profound meditation [*sādhana*!])." (Wright 1972:140) *Vajrācāryas* have also told me that Amitabha Buddha taught Bungadya the secrets of yoga.

Bungadya and Cakwadya are also popularly considered to be related as uncle and nephew, and Minnath is occasionally referred to as *sanu* (small) Matsyendranath by Nepali speakers, but rarely, if at all, by Newars. One feature which is shared by Bungadya and Cakwadya as well as Cobahadya and Janmadya is their power to intercede on behalf of the deceased. Curiously, among Newars, this feature also serves to distinguish Cakwadya from Bungadya, for Cakwadya is far more often described with reference to his influence in the underworld. This power is more often cited as the motivation for devotion to Cakwadya than it is for devotion to Bungadya.

A well known myth which describes the founding of Cakwadya baha tells the story of how *Avalokiteśvara* went to the underworld to comfort the spirits there. His visit caused Yamaraj, the Lord of the underworld, to realize that the young king Vrisadeva had been brought to him in error, prompting Yama to restore Vrisadeva to the world of the living. Vrisadeva, in honor of his saviour, had the image made which is now also known as Cakwadya.⁷³ This story potentially applies to all *Lokeśwar* as it was *Padmapāṇi Lokeśwar* or *Avalokiteśvara* who is described as going to the underworld. Scenes from hell are portrayed on the bottoms of the struts in Bungadya's Ta Baha temple, but it is Cakwadya who is worshipped as one who can intervene in one's fate after death and is popularly referred to as Yamaraj.⁷⁴

⁷³The particular form of Avalokitesvara worshipped as Cakwadya is *Jatādhāri Lokeśwar*. This form is especially appropriate for this context, for ascetics with matted hair (whose coiffure is emulated on this image) typically frequent cremation grounds.

⁷⁴Klass (1978:159) describes a local deity in Bengal, referred to as Dhamôraj, who is identified as Buddhist and as Yama, and to whom sacrifice is offered by Brahmin priests who actually kill the sacrificial animal.

During the months in which Bungadya resides in Patan, the daily morning *pujās* (*nitya puja*) of Bungadya, Cakwadya, and Kwa Baha dya are timed so that devotees, including musicians playing cymbals, fifes, and drums, can witness all three. Hundreds of devotees rush to do this every day, even in the misty chill of winter at four o'clock in the morning. These three gods are popularly conceived of as a trinity; Bungadya, who is honored first, provides food, Cakwadya, who is honored second, provides in the afterlife, and Kwa Baha dya, who is honored third, provides wealth.⁷⁵

Janmadya is also honored as Yamaraj, and Newar Buddhists from Kathmandu who wish to divine when and if a family member will die will burn an oil lamp in Jana bahal and observe its flame for the answer.⁷⁶ This aspect of *Avalokiteśvara* is also noted in Cobaha dya, though in a less determined fashion. Chobhadya's temple is popularly referred to in the foreign community as the "pots and pans" temple because of the numerous utensils attached under its eaves. These utensils are principally offered by women who have no offspring to assist in their funeral rites. In the case of Bungadya, this aspect has been deemphasized, probably due to the proximity of Cakwadya who is more strongly associated with Yamaraj, undoubtedly due to his particular myth of origin.

Individuals who make offerings to Bungadya, no matter where they live, almost invariably make similar offerings to Cakwadya, whether they are simple offerings of flowers or lavish offerings of silver banners (*patāha*). As close as the

⁷⁵Kwapte, as the *bāhā* in which Kwabaha dya resides is known, is the wealthiest and largest of the *bāhās* in Patan. This wealth is quite conspicuously evident in its extraordinarily lavish decoration.

⁷⁶*Avalokiteśvara* also appeared in a flame to warn Simhasartha Bahu that he was consorting with a demoness in the oft-cited myth explaining the origins of Tham bahal in Kathmandu (c.f. Slusser 1982:362-3).

association with Bungadya may be, contemporary Newars do not usually explain their devotion or ritual activities in this way, but emphasize their concern about the hereafter and the great power held by Cakwadya. It is said that no other image of Cakwadya exists, for the god is so powerful that no-one has dared to make one. Though it would be foolish for me to enter into the debate over whether or not Cakwadya is one of the *pengu taye Lokeśwars* it is surprising that Locke has characterized Cakwadya baha as "minor shrine of Avalokitesvara (1980:373),⁷⁷ for it is certainly not minor in the minds of the Newar.

Bungadya, Cobahadya, and Naladya

Cobaha dya is also said to once have had an annual *rath jātrā*. His *rath jātrā* was discontinued not out of respect for Bungadya, but because it became too difficult to continue. Cobaha is an extremely important shrine for the residents of Patan, and Cobahadya is popularly believed to have pre-dated the arrival of Bungadya to the valley. The *Vajrācārya* priests who perform rituals for Cobaha are members of the Ta baha *saṃgha*, and are extremely familiar with the practices of the Panjus. Not surprisingly, they claim that the rituals they perform for Cobahadya, particularly the *daśa karma pujās*, are more exacting and thorough.⁷⁸ They also regard Janmadya as a recent arrival in the valley and of lesser

⁷⁷His conclusion seems to have been based, in part, on a lack of verifiable historical material which would confirm (or deny) the local tradition that Cakwadya baha is one of the oldest in Patan.

⁷⁸The Cobahadya *daśa karma pujās* are performed much more deliberately and publicly, there being a special dais in Cobaha for displaying the god during this ritual. The *daśa karma* for Bungadya, though not concealed, is visible only through a small window in the Ta Baha temple. The Cobaha *daśa karma puja* lasts more than twenty-four hours, including secret rituals witnessed only by the *pujāris* and *dyā: pālās*, whereas the Bungadya *daśa karma puja* lasts only five or six hours.

importance than Cakwadya. The cult of Naladya has only recently been revived,⁷⁹ and is closely linked to Bungadya in many ways. The most striking is that the Bungamati *pānjus* perform all the rituals for his annual festival.

Each of these gods, with the exception of Janmadya, who is also identified as *Padmapāṇi Lokeśwar*, is identified with a different incarnation of *Avalokiteśvara*.⁸⁰ Bungadya is distinguished from Janmadya by Nepali speakers by virtue of the color of the images, Bungadya being red, and thus called *Rāto Matsyendranath*, and Janmadya being white, and therefore dubbed *Seto Matsyendranath*. Each of these five gods has a different myth of origin and is noted for particular powers, and each of them has a similar but distinctive annual festival. The ritual and beliefs which surround each of these gods draw on a common repertoire of themes which extol the power and compassion of these gods as well as celebrate the power and ingeniousness of the humans who have directed the powers of gods to their own ends. We shall later consider these variations to better illuminate the themes, particularly those articulated in the annual *jātrā* of Bungadya.

⁷⁹The revival of this shrine and the annual observances to Naladya began in 1953, and the annual palanquin procession which is now the climax of the bathing ceremonies and *daśa karma* initiations was first instituted in 1960 (Locke 1980:366-67).

⁸⁰Cobaha dya is considered to be *ānandādi* (happiness, joy) *Lokeśwar*, Cakwadya is *Jatādhāri Lokeśwar* (the *Lokeśwar* with matted hair; an ascetic cum Shiva), Naladya is considered *Srstikānthā Lokeśwar*, (the "creation" *Lokeśwar* from which other deities emanated). Though sanskrit, the meanings of these names were popular knowledge.

CHAPTER VI

THE FESTIVAL OF BUNGADYA: RENEWAL, INITIATION, PROCESSION, AND PROTECTION

The chariot festival of Bungadya begins every year in late April or early May on the first day of the dark half of *Baisakh*. This day is noted in the Newari astrological calendar as *Bungayā*,¹ the day when the god is taken in procession to be placed in his chariot. Preparations for this moment, including many events which recall the festival's origins, begin six months earlier with arrangements for the god's trip from Bungamati to Patan. From the time these preparations start to the day on which Bungadya's return to Bungamati is celebrated, over one hundred different events which are vital to the annual ritual cycle of Bungadya transpire. These events, listed in the appendix, include only the more important of many rituals, feasts, sacrifices, and other tasks which are performed annually as part of the public festival of Bungadya.²

The description of the festival which follows is, by virtue of necessity, severely abridged. All of the most famous events are described, as are some which are known to only a few individuals. This selection is based on the need to illuminate the issues which lie at the heart of this dissertation; the multiplicity of beliefs which may inform any given activity, the interrelationship between power and proximity to the divine, and sacrifice as a means of appeasement and method of securing protection.

¹The suffix "yā:" is a truncated form of the word "yātrā", (or *jātrā*), meaning "procession".

²See the introduction to the appendix for details regarding the criteria for the inclusion of events therein.

These descriptions modify and expand the ethnographic record concerning practices associated with Bungadya. A comprehensive revision of the ethnographic record would be inappropriate here, but errors in previous accounts which distort or obfuscate facts which are crucial to the issues considered here are addressed. The ethnographic detail provided below also illustrates the point that change is an integral part of this ancient tradition rather than something to which tradition stands in opposition.

The sketches provided in this chapter also serve to elucidate some of the salient aspects of Newar religion described in chapter four. These descriptions of the *jātrā* therefore serve to expand and modify the ethnographic literature on Newars in a more general sense. The *jātrā* is not, however, held up to mirror Newar society, for it is not a thing apart which mimics social life.³ It is more like a Newar window than a mirror: intricately wrought, distinctively Newar, an integral part of the structure which surrounds it, and worthy of examination in its own right, yet also transparent, providing a unique view into the complexity of Newar culture and society.

Determining the Auspicious Moment (*Sāhit swayegu*)

Many of Bungadya's movements, as well as the life cycle rites and journeys of humans, are coordinated within a universe of predictable celestial events. These events, including phases of the moon, the movements and conjunctions of planets, and other factors which are far beyond the layman's understanding are characterized in terms of their auspiciousness for various endeavours. Thus the

³cf. Hanchette's (1970) dissertation concerning festivals in a village in Mysore in which the village festival is viewed as a replica of village social structure.

appropriate timing for moving Bungadya from Bungamati to Patan is determined by astrologers.⁴ Echoing the tradition of gods comprising groups of four, there are four astrologers known as the *pengu tāye jośipim* ("astrologers of the four places")⁵ who convene to determine the timing of key events in the annual ritual cycle of Bungadya. They meet in the center of Patan in a resthouse, known as Manimandapa, which was erected in 1700-01 for the purpose of sheltering the Joshis (and possibly the Patan Maia Kings) during their astrological calculations (Locke 1973:8). The four astrologers determine the timing for bringing Bungadya to Patan in November or December after the full moon of Kartik.⁶ The auspicious moment for Bungadya's journey usually falls several weeks prior to the winter solstice, though it can occur as late as February.⁷ The astrologers gather in the early morning to weigh the merits of the various possible days, using astrological calendars (*pātro*) which can be readily purchased for a few cents in most bookstores.⁸ The options are often limited, for entire months (such as Gunla) are considered inappropriate for travel, as are certain days of the week (Tuesday, for

⁴These astrologers also calculate the auspicious day for the last leg of the procession from Thatti (Pore tole, Np.) to Jawalakhel. Interviews and chronicle accounts also indicate that the astrologers are also consulted in the event the image has to be taken down from the chariot in order to conduct repairs.

⁵If these *Jośīs* ever did live in distinctly different quarters of Patan, they no longer do, for two reside in the central western part of town.

⁶The *sāhit* was determined in 1983 several days prior to the full moon. This unusual timing was attributed to astrological conditions (it was *Brihaspati asta*, when Jupiter is descending).

⁷Locke (1977:18) mentions the interpretation that the god follows the sun northward and southward, though I did not encounter this.

⁸Many people own copies of these books, for they serve not only as calendars but as programs listing festivals and days of special observances. Much of their diagrammatic content is, however, unintelligible to the layman.

example). Representatives of the *Guthī Samsthan* office in Ta Baha attend, usually including the *subba*, or director, for the date to be determined marks the beginning of an increase in his day-to-day responsibilities concerning the many tasks to be performed in conjunction with Bungadya.

Once the auspicious timing has been determined, one of the astrologers pens a formal declaration to the central *guthī samsthan*, and the director offers *prasāḍ* of flowers,⁹ fruit and sindur to the astrologers and other participants. Perhaps fifty to a hundred people crowd to hear the news, which then spreads rapidly by word of mouth and is announced in the newspapers the following day.

The trip from Bungamati to Patan is preceded by three days of rituals and other preparations in Bungamati. These rituals delineate fundamental relationships which are generally understood to exist between Bungadya and the priests that serve him, and between Bungadya and other deities.

Painting the Image

On the morning two days prior to bringing the god to Patan, the *Niyekhus*, high-caste Hindu *Śreṣṭhās*, come to Bungamati to refurbish the image of Bungadya prior to its journey. In contrast to the elaborate rituals which are performed prior to the annual re-painting ceremonies in Patan, no ritual preparations precede this essentially cosmetic procedure in Bungamati. The attending *pānju*, having removed much of Bungadya's jewelry, simply lifts the image from its place in the

⁹Part of this *prasāḍ*, given to the eldest *jośi*, is a bit of the flower crown worn by Bungadya during the last bathing ceremony which took place nearly a year before. These flowers are the same kind offered to boys and men by their sisters at *Kijā puja*, and are known to retain their color and form, qualities which women cite as the reason they give them to ensure the long life of their brothers.

main temple sanctum and moves it to another *āsana*, or honored seat, located outside on the eastern side of the temple. This *āsana* consists of a raised lotus motif, probably of stone within but now covered with brass repoussé, into which the base of the image is placed in order to be painted.¹⁰ The *Niyekhus* bring a large and dilapidated cloth painting which they hang behind the image as a backdrop whenever they paint it.¹¹

The *Niyekhus* then proceed to undress the upper part of the image's torso and repair any cracks with clay brought from Mhaipi Ajima, a major shrine to Jogambara, a tantric deity who plays a major role in the cult of Bungadya. After carefully marking the precise locations of the eyes with coordinates lightly marked on the sides of the image, they completely obliterate the facial features by applying a slip of gray clay with a dampened cloth.¹² After this slip is allowed to dry, the image is repainted over the course of the afternoon. This entire procedure is done in the open, and attracts curious onlookers throughout the day. In the late afternoon, when people are returning from their work in the fields, the *Niyekhus* dress the god in layers of Newar shirts which are made for the god and offered by devotees every year. They then replace the crown and other pieces of jewelry which were on the image when the *pānju* attendant (*dyā: pālā*) brought it out to be painted. The temple attendant then performs the morning *nitya* ("daily")

¹⁰An inscription on this brass form bears the date 1031, which probably corresponds to A.D. 1911. It is quite common for donors to offer metal overlays which cover older stone images. The most dramatic example of this is the gigantic bull which resides in the temple compound of Pashupatinath.

¹¹This *tanka* is in such poor condition that it is difficult to make out any images that may have once been portrayed.

¹²For further details concerning the substances used for painting and repairing the image, see below concerning the image renewal which follows the annual bathing ceremony.

pujā: while the god is still outside the temple.

The *nitya puja* is one of four daily *pujās* performed by the *dyā: pālā* every day, wherever the god may be. It is essentially a repetition of the deity's morning bathing, when the *dyā pālā* symbolically washes the god's face by pouring water over a mirror in which the image's face is reflected.¹³ Normally this *nitya puja* is performed at sunrise. At this time, throngs of people gather to view the ritual, hopeful to catch a glimpse of the god's face in the silver mirror when it is shown to the crowd; a sign of the god's favor.¹⁴ Residents of Bungamati gather this afternoon to watch this *pujā* and the return of the newly refurbished god to the temple sanctum.¹⁵ As in the morning ceremonies, the *dyā: pālā* concludes the rite by spraying the crowd with the bath water, which is considered to be *prasād*. The

¹³Recall that the Newar greeting appropriate among close friends in the early morning is to ask if one has washed one's face. It is considered one of the first things one does in the morning, certainly the first which is a suitable topic of polite conversation.

¹⁴Locke provides the following interpretation of bathing the reflection of flames representing Agni in a mirror. "Meditation on the mirror leads to the realization that all phenomena (and hence all images, all deities, even the concepts *samsara* and *nirvana*) are mere reflections of the void (*sunyata* = *vajra*). This leads the adept to the realization of non-duality, and therefore, to a realization of his own identity with the void. He has become *vajrasattva* - the diamond being." (Locke 1980:110, note. 62) This complex intellectual argument which recapitulates the fundamental process of identity in *sādhana*, may be more simply expressed in the context of this daily ritual; one who sees a deity in a mirror into which one is looking experiences identity with the deity along with the realization that both his or her identity and that of the god are mere reflections.

¹⁵It is unclear how many people usually come to witness this event, though it is probably never more than a few hundred. On one of the two occasions I witnessed the preliminary painting of the image it coincided with the full moon celebration for which several hundred people, including Bahun-Chetris and Tibetans, had gathered for an all-night vigil. On the other occasion the image was returned quite late, due to the tardy arrival of the *jajman* from Patan.

pānju attendant, with the assistance of the *Niyekhus*, then returns the image to the temple sanctum.

Two features of this relatively small-scale event bear particular notice. Prior to the painting of the image, no ritual is performed in order to remove the spirit or "life" (*jīvan*) from the image, as is done prior to the bathing and more extensive painting done in Patan. The initiated *Niyekhus*, a clan of high-caste Śreṣṭhās, therefore not only handle but physically alter a "god" with spirit intact, indicating that their initiation (*dekhā*) empowers them to have far more intimate contact with the divinity than had previously been thought. Others have consistently reported that only the *pānjus* can touch the god (Locke:1973, 1980). The status of the image with respect to the presence or absence of the deity within is often ambiguous during the period of preparations which precedes the festival.¹⁶ While the god was being painted in 1983, the *dyā: pālā* performed the usual afternoon *pujā* to the silver cover for Bungadya's feet which had been placed where Bungadya normally resides within the temple sanctum. This use of the foot cover as a metonymic representation of the deity occurs several times again in the festival, and is consistent with the importance attributed to the image's feet as discussed in chapter five.

After the image is returned to the temple, the *Niyekhus* proceed to the temple of Hayagriba Bhairab in the southeast corner of Bungadya's temple compound. Here they perform a secret *pujā* behind closed doors, after which they play no further role until nearly six months later.

¹⁶Other examples of this ambiguity include Bungdya's dalliance with the *jyāpuni* in Kirtipur (commemorated annually with offerings to her descendants), during which time no *prasād* is offered from the *rath*, and the retrieval of "the god" from Koduwal (see Appendix for details).

Shortly after the image is returned to the temple, a series of three rites is performed, each of which involves a *kalaś puja* followed by a *hwama puja*¹⁷. As these *pujās* are the most important ritual form employed by Newar Buddhist priests, they merit a brief general discussion before proceeding with the specific details of their use on this occasion.

Kalaś puja and Hwama puja

In the *kalaś puja* a deity is summoned, through *sādhana*, into a water vessel (*kalaś*). The nature of the presence of a god (or gods, as more than one may be summoned) afforded by this *puja*, permits access to the god's powers and provides the opportunity to make offerings directly. As Locke points out, *kalaś pujās* are often performed in front of images of the gods invoked. The priest and *jajman* who perform the *kalaś puja* not only seek the presence of a god, but the coercively invoked, and therefore controlled and immediate, access to a god and its powers.¹⁸

The *kalaś puja* may be performed without the *hwama*, or fire sacrifice, but the *hwama* is always preceded by the *kalaś puja*. The *hwama puja* is essentially an elaborate means of making offerings to the god(s) summoned during the *kalaś*

¹⁷Locke refers to these rituals as "*kalasa hvama pujas*", a very descriptive but seldom used term. Usually the *kalaś puja*, if it has a particular purpose such as appeasement, will be referred to in terms of that purpose (*śanti puja*, in this case), or if it is to a specific god, it may be referred to in terms of the god to be invoked (often done in the case of *pujās* to Tara). If the *hwama puja*, which must always be preceded by a *kalaś puja*, is to be performed, the entire ritual is likely to be referred to as a *hwama puja* or *yagye*, for that is the more distinctive and elaborate aspect of the ritual.

¹⁸Lewis also emphasizes the aspect of control of the deity exercised in the *kalaś puja*, saying that it is "Based on the notion that a priest can coercively summon the divinity into the *kalash* through ritual means..." (1984:216).

pujā. Though other gods are summoned during the *hwama*, specifically Agni, the goddess of fire, the *jajmans* and priests with whom I discussed the *hwama* generally regarded it as a series of offerings to the principal deity invoked in the preceeding *kalaś pujā*. Though Locke has pointed out that both of these *pujās* constitute ritualized forms of *sādhana*, he too acknowledges that the *sādhana* aspect of the *hwama* is not generally recognized as its objective (1980:108).

A detailed description of these *pujās* is beyond the purview of this dissertation for several reasons. The first is that the interpretation of the minute aspects of these complex rituals is not only beyond the understanding of the layman, but often beyond the understanding of the priest as well. Though some *Vajrācāryas* and *Śākyas* clearly take a special interest in the esoteric meanings of all the implements, movements, and ingredients involved, others are hard-pressed to articulate more than the overall purpose of the ritual at hand, i.e., to summon a given deity for a particular purpose. Though Locke chose to consult with *Vajrācāryas* whom he had identified as having the most knowledge concerning the rituals they perform, he still found that they interpreted them in unorthodox ways, prompting him to comment that "... many of the priests obviously have no understanding of the logical progress of the ritual" (1980:110, note 60).¹⁹ The

¹⁹The *vidhi*, or ritual manuals used for these rituals are generally written in Sanskrit, a language which relatively few priests fully understand. I have noted some *vidhis* which are marked with rubrics indicating word boundaries; a feature required by anyone attempting a purely phonetic recitation but unnecessary for one who fully understands the language.

second reason that we need not subject these rituals to detailed scrutiny here is that Locke has discussed them at some length.²⁰

The *kalaś puja* involves twenty-five discrete procedures.²¹ These steps may be briefly summarized as follows: the priest purifies himself, introduces the *jajman* and expresses his intentions and/or desires, situates the *puja* and associated equipment (especially the *kalaś*) in a cosmic diagram (*maṇḍala*) which represents the universe in microcosm,²² summons the deity, summons and worships protective deities including the *Lokapālas* and *aṣṭamstrkās*²³, honors the *nāgas* (the primordial residents of the valley), worships the summoned principal deity, and finally, dismisses the deities evoked.

Locke lists only six implements as essential for the performance of this *puja*: the *kalaś*, the *maṇḍala* which is drawn beneath it, a saucer of yogurt (representing

²⁰Locke bases his descriptions primarily on a sixteenth century text edited by Amoghapaśa Vajracarya and published in 1973 (1093 N.S.). It is presumed, therefore, that this text or editions similar to it are currently in widespread use among *Vajrācāryas* in the valley. Locke contrasts the orthodox interpretations suggested by the text with interpretations offered by practicing *Vajrācāryas*, but it is clear that the text is his primary authority. Lewis has provided abbreviated outlines of the *kalaś* and *hwama puja*s which differ only slightly from Locke's description with respect to minor details, and cites Locke in his explication of various parts of the ritual (1984:221-23).

²¹as enumerated by Lewis (1984:217-18)

²²This early portion of the *puja* is properly referred to as the *Guru Maṇḍala puja*, which primarily concerns the preparation of the hierophant. The *Gurumaṇḍala* text which Locke consulted for his description of the rite includes the editorial comment that this *puja* must be performed "... to purify oneself ... before one salutes the *guru*, takes refuge in the three jewels, or performs a *puja*" (1980:83), all of which are involved in the performance of the *kalaś* and *hwama puja*s.

²³Both the *Lokapālas*, of which there are sixteen (cf. Locke 1980:88) and the *aṣṭamstrkās* ("eight mother goddesses") are considered guardian deities associated with specific directions, though the attribution of specific directions to the latter varies from place to place (Slusser 1982:384).

the *Bodhicitta*, or "enlightened mind"), a receptacle for *nāgas* (*nāgpan*), a *bali* *pujā* (food offerings) for the protective deities, another *bali* offering for Herucakrasamvara, and a lamp, representing *śakti*, conceived of as energy.

My observation of hundreds of *kalaś* *pujās* prompts me to amend this description in two ways. First, I have never witnessed a *kalaś* *pujā* that involved so few implements.²⁴ All but one of the *kalaś* *pujās* I have witnessed included, for example, a ritual mirror (*jwalā nṛāykan*) and an ornamental container for the colored *sindur* powder (*sinha: mū*), prominently displayed in line with the *kalaś* and other items.²⁵ Some *pānjus* aver that the five-tiered top of the *sinha: mū* represents the five meditation (*pāṇca dhyāni*) Buddhas. Others seem to find the union of its pointed cover and broad hollow base to be more evocative of the union of *Śakta* (or Shiva) and *Śakti*,²⁶ and refer to it as such or simply as *śakti*.²⁷

²⁴Generally, a line of vessels and implements is set up with the *kalaś* placed in the middle. This line may contain as few as six items, or as many as thirty or forty, depending on the ritual.

²⁵This exception was an ancillary *kalaś* *pujā* performed in conjunction with two others which preceded it at Kotwa daha (see Appendix).

²⁶A Newari expression describes an appropriately matched couple as a *jwalam sinha:mū*.

²⁷Locke correctly notes the common Newar Buddhist usage of *śakti* to mean the female counterpart involved in sexual union and/or the energy derived from such union. Though Locke follows Bharati in stating that "...the term *śakti* is not used in Buddhist tantras." (1980:97, note 49), it is commonly used in this manner among Newar Buddhists. The term *śakti dyā:*, for example, is used to designate a deity in coitus as well as a male deity's female consort (cf. *infra* Ch.4).

Secondly, the lamp to which Locke refers must be the ever-present *sukundā*, an oil lamp which commonly represents Ganesh,²⁸ and is vital to almost any *pujā*.

The *hwama puja* is in many ways quite similar to the *kalaś puja*; divinities, including Agni, the goddess of fire, are summoned, and protective deities are invoked. Agni is also bathed, in the manner of Bungadya's morning *nitya puja*, by pouring water over the fire's reflection in a ritual mirror. The priest summons the *Lokapāias*, or guardians of the directions and offers prayers for the King and the *jajman*, both of whom he mentions by name. The priest and *jajman* then bless numerous offerings and consign them to the fire. One item which is frequently among these offerings (which both Locke (1980:112) and Lewis (1984:222) note without comment) is the coconut. This particular offering is significant in that it is widely recognized as representing the *jajman's* head.²⁹ Locke has noted that at one point during the *hwama puja* the *Vajrācārya* priest wraps a piece of red cloth over his shoulder and across his chest "... signifying the offering of himself into the fire and hence his own dissolution into the void." (1980:111) The common appellation, "fire sacrifice," properly emphasizes an important aspect of the *hwama puja*, for both the *jajman* and priest symbolically consign themselves to the *hwama* flames.

In addition to the element of sacrifice which is integral to the *hwama puja*, several other features of the *kalaś* and *hwama puja*s deserve recapitulation

²⁸The *sukundā* is listed by Ratna Kaji Vajracarya as one of the essential pieces of equipment (*puja jhwalam*) for a *kalaś puja* (1980:6). *Sukundā*s almost invariably feature Ganesh's image. See Toffin (1984:540) and Nepali (1965:392) regarding the association of Ganesh with the *sukundā*.

²⁹This interpretation has often been spontaneously offered to me as if it were a subject of fascination or, at least amusement, for the Newar as well. David Gellner noted that a coconut offered in a *hwama* performed in Kwa baha actually had facial features painted on it (personal communication, 1983).

because of their importance in the cult of Bungadya. First (in honor of the subject matter), Ganesh is worshipped in the course of almost any *pujā*, and is usually honored first so that he might remove obstacles rather than create them, as Ganesh is considered prone to do if slighted. Second, the King is mentioned by name and prayed for in every *hwama* along with the *jajman*. Third, summoning and worshipping any deity through the *kalaś puja* necessitates the invocation of fierce divinities to whom meat (part of the *Lokapāla* food offering) and alcohol must be offered. These fierce deities are summoned to protect the rites from the interference of malevolent *krodha* spirits.³⁰ The preservation of the sanctity and efficacy of ritual through the evocation of bloodthirsty protective gods is a fundamental feature of the *kalaś* and *hwama puja*s. It also embodies an opposition which repeatedly finds expression in the worship of Bungadya.

Having outlined the basic characteristics of the *kalaś* and *hwama puja*s, we may now proceed to describe the sequence of events in which they often play a major role.

³⁰Locke finds this interpretation of the *krodha* as a troublesome malevolent interloper to be at odds with the esoteric significance of the *krodha* elaborated by Tucci. Tucci describes them as emanations of deities intended to defeat the incursions of the unconscious into consciousness, and therefore ultimately helpful. "The unconscious may overflow into the conscious and suffocate it, extinguish it, but the conscious has no such power of eliminating and dispersing the unconscious. It is a matter of a long and difficult struggle that never ceases and which consciousness must carry right into the enemy's camp. This is possible in only one way, by assuming a pugnacious and terrifying appearance suited to the powers which must be combated." (Tucci 1969:60, cited by Locke (1980:90). To embrace the potentially malevolent in pursuit of the munificent is part of the struggle to achieve enlightenment as well as part of the more mundane struggle embodied in the *rath jātrā*. This dialectic (apparently) flows through the inner processes of meditation as well as its physical manifestation in the *kalaś* and *hwama puja*s, and the popular worship of Bungadya. Note that one of the one hundred and eight manifestations of *Avalokiteśvara* is the wrathful Hayagrība Lokeshwar (Amoghābajra Vajracarya N.S. 1099 [1979]:29).

The Image Painting Fire Offerings (*hwama puja*)

Shortly after the refurbished image is returned to the temple, a Vajaracarya *pānju* who will remain the principal priest throughout the *jātrā*, two other *pānju* assistants, and a *jajman*,³¹ begin a series of three rituals, the first two of which are *hwama puja*s. The first *hwama puja* is set up directly in front of the temple in the permanent *hwama pit* (*kunda*) set into the pavement. The *kaiś puja* which precedes it does not constitute a re-installation of the spirit into the image, nor is it part of its reconsecration, as occurs after the image is bathed and repainted in Patan. It is simply an invocation of Bungadya along with the other deities which are routinely involved in the *hwama* rite.

This first *hwama* is performed quickly, lasting only a little more than an hour. The second *hwama* is offered to a god commonly known in Bungamati as Ikhayedya, but identified by the *pānjus* as Yogambara. Ikhayedya is located in a shallow depression in the ground just outside the southern entrance of Amarapur. It is over this "shrine", distinguished only by some rough stone paving and several aniconic stone deities clustered at one end, that the *rath* is built once every twelve years. These deities are collectively referred to as both Ikhaye dya and Yogambara and their shrine is referred to as "Ikhaye" or "Yogambara *pīth*".³²

³¹This *jajman*, a *Śreṣṭhā* from Nhugha in Patan, serves every year in this capacity.

³²No one I asked could offer any derivation for the name "Ikhaye dya". Manandhar defines *īkha* as "the spirit of revenge" (1986:17) and Shresthacarya defines *īkha ya-ye* as "meditate revenge" (1987:13), an appropriate characteristic for a bloodthirsty deity. The designation *pīth* literally means "seat," and is generally applied to open shrines to tantric divinities, most often female.

This deity plays a prominent role in the annual ritual cycle of Bungadya, and therefore merits some discussion at this point. Yogambara is the *āgam dyā:* of Amarapur, the *bāhā:* of the *pānjus* and Bungadya.³³ This god is therefore also the lineage deity (*digu dyā:*) of the *pānjus*.³⁴ The Yogambara worshipped at Ikhaye and the Yogambara of the *āgam* however, are not precisely the same. "Yogambara" in orthodox usage refers to a male divinity, considered to be an emanation of the *dhyāni* Buddha Akshobhya,³⁵ who is often portrayed in coitus with his consort, Yogambara Gyana-dakini (Bhattacharyya 1968:186). It is most likely this "śakti" (i.e. coital) image which is the *āgam dyā:* of Amarapur. The "Yogambara" most often worshipped during the *rath jātrā* and who resides at Ikhaye, however, is Yogambara Gyana-dakini, who is often referred to simply by the name of her male consort, Yogambara (see Slusser 1982:376). Another prominent *pīṭh* in which Yogambara is honored is at Mhaipi Ajima; the original location of the *pānju*'s lineage deity (Locke 1985:518) and the source of the clay

³³The *āgam* of Amarapur, or as it is sometimes known to outsiders, "Bungabaha," is located the the west of the main temple compound in an adjoining courtyard known as "Luta Baha." The apparent confusion noted by Locke (1985:238) with respect to the deity in this *bāhā:* is due to the fact that Manakamanadevi is the principal deity in an adjacent courtyard, known as Mul nani, not Luta Baha as reported by Locke.

³⁴The *pānjus* do not generally worship Ikhaye dya as their *digu dyā:*, though I have been told that a sacrifice offered at Ikhaye was "like" their *digu dyā: pujā*. The aniconic *digu dyā:* of the *pānjus* is located in a field east of Jawalakhel in Bungamati.

³⁵Yogambara is not the "...esoteric Adhi Buddha..." as Slusser (1984:376) suggests, but the emanation of a one of the five meditation (*dhyānī*) Buddhas, Akshobya, who is considered to be an emanation of Adhi Buddha.

used to repair Bungadya.³⁶ Wright's chronicle records that Bandhudatta sought and received the assistance of Yogambara gyana-dakini at the start of the mission to bring Bungadya to Nepal (1972:142-43). Though this episode was never related to me, it reflects contemporary practice, for this goddess, known as the "Yogambara" at Ikhaye, is frequently worshipped and propitiated with sacrifices over the course of the annual ritual cycle of Bungadya.³⁷

The fire sacrifice (*hwama pujā*) offered to ikhaye dya before Bungadya is brought to Patan is unusual in that meat is among the offerings consigned to the sacrificial fire.³⁸ This is the only deity so worshipped in conjunction with Bungadya.

³⁶The Yogambara at Mhaipi Ajima, though it includes both male and female counterparts in coitus, is also known as a "goddess," the *dakini* clearly dominating her consort in the general imagination.

³⁷Wright's chronicle describes how Bandhudatta enlisted the assistance of "Yogambara gyana dakini" on the mission to retrieve Bungadya, yet later equates "Gyana dakini" with Bungadya's mother, causing Slusser to imply that Yogambara gyana-dakini and Matsyendra's mother are one and the same (1982:377). It is unlikely, however, that "Gyana ("knowledge") dakini" and "Yogambara gyana dakini" refer to the same deity in this myth, for the "Gyana-dakini" that is Matsyendranath's mother is separately introduced only shortly after Yogambara gyana-dakini, and Gyana-dakini's name is derived from "... being created by Maya (delusion)" (Wright 1972:144). In practice, the Yogambara of Ikhaye is never equated with Bungadya's mother. Slusser (ibid) also suggests that the shrine at *maju sima*, clearly devoted to Bungadya's mother, includes non-anthropomorphic images identified as Yogambara and Gyana-dakini. The hole in the pavement at the center of the shrine is associated with Bungadya's mother and the three principle deities on the side of the hypaethral shrine are commonly identified as Lalita Jyapu, Narendradeva, and Bandhudatta, the latter being represented by the stone *vajrācārya* crown which Slusser associates with Yogambara.

³⁸A similar *hwama* including meat is again offered to Yogambara at Ikhaye during the two *Yachim kayegu pujās* performed nearly two months later.

For this ritual and the one that follows, a *suwa:* (special *jyāpu* assistant)³⁹ joins the proceedings. One of the *pānjus* assisting the priest in this *hwama* once casually remarked to me that before they used to use "*manuyagu lā*" ("human flesh") for this purpose, but now substitute buffalo meat.⁴⁰ At the conclusion of the *hwama*, which lasts about an hour and a half, the participants, excluding any of the *pānjus* who may be fasting in preparation for carrying the god, are served a small ceremonial snack (*samay*), including meat and rice beer.

The ritual officiants, *suwa:*, and *jajman* then proceed to the shrine of Hayagriba Bhairab, located in the south-east corner of Amarapur. There they sacrifice a goat, which is first blessed by the priest and *jajman* and then killed by the *suwa:*. This sacrifice, also attended by the attendant to Hayagriba,⁴¹ is followed by another *samay* and a small feast for the participants. At this feast, which concludes late in the evening, three leaf plates of food are set aside for Bungadya, Hayagriba, and ikhaye dya: feast participants in absentia.

³⁹The *suwa:* are high status *jyāpus* who traditionally cook food at feasts. Eight *suwa:*s in Bungamati rotate the responsibility of serving in various capacities during rituals associated with Bungadya. The most common task which the *suwa:* performs is sacrificing animals, excluding buffaloes which only those of the butcher caste kill.

⁴⁰Locke (1980:80) notes that "...*balis* offered in secret tantric rites should theoretically include the meat of a horse, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a man." The tradition that human sacrifice was once performed in the Kathamandu valley is re-enforced with rumours that the practice persists. Children are taught to run from the strangely clad "*Jalamis*" from Harisiddhi, lest they be abducted for an offering in their twelve-year festival. Many adults are reluctant to visit Khokana, a small village adjacent to Bungamati where the infamous Sikali Devi is located, for the same reason. See Slusser (1982:337-340) for a detailed consideration of other evidence supporting the contention that human sacrifice was once practiced in the valley.

⁴¹A clan of *Śākya*s not connected with the Bungadya *samgha* serves in this capacity. They are initiated in Bare nani, a courtyard dominated by a *caitya* in the middle of Bungamati.

This series of rituals is not publically attended, and involves very few participants; two factors which diminish its social importance but which simplify the delineation of the relationships between these three gods and the priests who serve and/or make offerings to them. These relationships form the structural basis for the organization of many of the rituals and celebrations associated with Bungadya, and can be summarized as follows: 1. The worship of Bungadya frequently occurs in conjunction with offerings to ikhaye dya and Bhairab, both of which accept blood sacrifice. 2. Though *pānjus* officiate at sacrificial rites, blessing both the animal and the knife with which it is to be slain, they never kill the sacrificial victim themselves.

The Palanquin Procession to Patan

The eight Panjus who carry the god's palanquin must be in a state of purity. Therefore, two days before bringing the god to Patan, each of these eight *pānjus* begins a fast and has a barber (*nau*) shave his head, trim his fingernails and toenails, and paint his fingertips and toes with red stain.⁴² The day before they carry the god the *pānjus* break their fast with a ritually pure meal (*pālan*) which they prepare for themselves by the Nakhu river.⁴³

⁴²Trimming toenails (*lusi dhinegu*) and staining them red with *hala*, is a purifactory rite performed for many different rituals requiring a high degree of purity, including weddings and *guthī* celebrations. It is normally performed by a barber or his wife.

⁴³This usually consists of flattened rice, yogurt, honey, bananas and ghi. The *pānjus* prepare cooked rice for themselves instead of dry parched rice (*baji*) as they are commensal and simultaneously in a state of purity.

At sunrise on the day the god is brought to Patan, the principal *jajman* for the rites associated with the *jātrā* starts a water clock⁴⁴ in order to determine the precise moment the image should be moved. This *jajman*, henceforth referred to as the "*jātrā jajman*", is one of two *Śresthās* from Patan who (on alternate years) assume the role of principal *jajman* throughout the *jātrā* and the preparations which precede it.⁴⁵ The *jajman* watches over the clock in a resthouse opposite Bungadya's temple. When the auspicious moment arrives, the *jajman* goes to perform a brief *pujā* to Bungadya, at which point the *pānju* attendant loops lengths of five-colored thread (*pasukā*) over the top of the image and down to its feet, grasps the image by its shoulders, and shakes it. This fulfills the requirement that the god be moved at the auspicious moment.

As the auspicious moment in 1983, for example, fell in the morning, few were available to escort the god, and only a meager crowd could have witnessed the festivities. Even if there had been people about, there remained a sacrifice to be performed and feast to be eaten prior to the procession. This sort of compromise between the prescribed and the possible is typical, and not viewed as a contravention of orthodoxy or decay of tradition. In fact, this ritual of *sāhit* movement, or token movement at the auspicious time, is also applied thrice more while the god is in the *rath*. On these occasions, however, the string is looped from the god to the front of the central beam of the chariot (*dhwamā*), and then

⁴⁴The water clock consists of a large brass bowl filled with water and a smaller brass bowl, with a small hole in its bottom, which floats in the larger bowl. Intervals of about twenty-five minutes are marked by the smaller bowl filling and sinking to the bottom of the larger bowl.

⁴⁵One of these *jajman* lives in Ta Baha, the other near Kwa Baha. Apparently there were, until recently, three *Śresthā* families who shared this role. Members of the third lineage, who lived in Saūgal, left no successor.

broken up and distributed as *prasād*.⁴⁶ On the morning of the palanquin festival, the *jātrā jajman* distributes pieces of the string which was draped over the god and water from the water clock as *prasād*. After doing this, he then goes to offer a brief *pujā* to the Ganesh at Karjebinayak⁴⁷ and the *āgam*, presumably to make offerings to Yogambara.

Before the auspicious moment arrives, a procession bearing the ceremonial sword (*tarbar*) of the Malla Kings of Patan comes to Bungamati. The sword on this occasion is carried by the actual descendant of the Patan Malla Kings,⁴⁸ but it is more commonly carried by a *vyāpu* hired for the purpose. The sword procession always assembles in the courtyard of the Malla palace (Mulcowk) prior to setting out on the dozens of occasions over the course of the *jātrā* when its presence is required. An umbrella bearer, torch bearer, and staff bearer accompany the ceremonial sword, marking its status of representing the *Yela juju*, or "King of Patan".⁴⁹ It is also accompanied by low-caste musicians who play a shawm, drum and cymbals.⁵⁰ This group comes the morning of the palanquin procession to attend a sacrifice to Hayagriba Bhairab and eat the feast which follows.

⁴⁶*Sāhit sālegu* ritual pullings are performed in Pulcowk on the evening the god is placed in the *rath*, the next day after the *kijā pujā* at Sworakutti patti, and in Pore tole on the day of the last leg of the *jātrā* to Jawalakhel (see Appendix).

⁴⁷This is one of the four principle Ganeshes in the valley, located on a hillock at the northern end of Bungamati.

⁴⁸The royal descendant is currently a shop-keeper.

⁴⁹Locke (1973:21) notes that Patan residents say that Srinivasa (a major Malla patron of Bungadya) has come when the sword arrives. Though some may associate this sword with Narendradeva, or "the King of Bhaktapur", as Locke suggests, there is another sword which symbolizes his presence (see below concerning *daśa karma pujā*).

⁵⁰See appendix glossary for details concerning *tarbar* procession members.

The sacrifice to Hayagriba Bhairab is preceded by a small procession consisting of the sword bearer's entourage and the head of the Guthi Samsthan office at Ta Bahal, known as the *subba*. The *subba* and sword bearer stop on their way to the Bhairab temple to make small offerings to Bungadya. The *subba* then acts as the *jajman* for the sacrifice of a goat to Bhairab while holding the king's sword, thus making the king the sponsor of the sacrifice by proxy. The ritual for the sacrifice is performed by the *Vajrācārya pāṇju* responsible that year for all the major *pujās* involving Bungadya (henceforth referred to as the "principal *pujāri*").⁵¹ After the preparatory ritual is completed, the *suwa:* slits the goat's throat, and directs its spurting blood into the image's giant gilded mouth. This is done in the presence of the *subba* bearing the king's sword, members of the *subba*'s family, the Hayagriba attendant, and the principal *pujāri*.

Once the ritual is over and *prasād* distributed, the ritual participants⁵² proceed to have *samay* as a prelude to the feast which follows. The *samay* and feast for forty people is sponsored by the *Guthi Samsthan*, but it is the ritual participants and others closely associated with the worship of Bungadya who actually prepare the food. As is typical of large-scale cooperative efforts devoted to Bungadya, the preparations for this feast involve a highly diverse group of people who have a connection with Bungadya, if nothing else, in common. Their

⁵¹This duty is rotated among the seven *Vajrācārya pāṇjus* on an annual basis.

⁵²The wife and son of the *subba* were among the participants in 1983.

association with Bungadya may be by virtue of inherited obligations and privileges, employment, or voluntary devotion.⁵³

The actual procession to Patan begins in the middle of the afternoon, and is accompanied by the *Gurujuya Paltan*, a group of soldiers which is officially attached to the King's *guru*. This honor guard dresses in nineteenth century military costume and functions as a ceremonial guard for several procession festivals around the valley.⁵⁴ They carry muzzle loading guns, which they fire at key points during these festivals. In addition to the *Gurujuya paltan*, the procession also includes the *Vajrācārya* principal *pujāri*, who precedes the god carrying a ceremonial mirror (*jvalā nhāykam*) and ringing his ritual bell (*gham*), two implements vital to Vajrayana ritual. Also included are the eight *pānju* bearers who take turns carrying the heavy palanquin, another *pānju* bearing "Karunamaya's sword", an umbrella bearer for Bungadya, the bearer of the king's sword and accompanying cohort,⁵⁵ torch bearers, *Guthī Samsthan* officials, and several policemen.⁵⁶ The procession proceeds quickly, requiring about two hours to reach

⁵³In 1984 they included the *subba*'s wife (a high caste *śreṣṭha*), the *mālīni* (considered to be a descendent of Lalita Jyapu), the *jyāpu* staff bearer, Newar and non-Newar *Samsthan* office workers, and others who regularly volunteer their time and effort for various tasks.

⁵⁴These include the Gangamai *jātra* in Pasupati, Janmadya's *rath jātra* and Indra Jatra in Kathmandu, and Bisket Jatra in Bhaktapur, among others.

⁵⁵The sword bearer wears the foot cover for Bungadya on his head during this procession.

⁵⁶The treasure of Bungadya is also brought to Patan at this time, transported in the twenty nine iron boxes in which it is stored. Also included in this treasure are the silver *kwam* used for the *jīvan nyās pujā* and the bathing. Though the *Prajamol* carriers start at roughly the same time as the rest of the procession, they lag behind under the weight of the treasure which they carry in the traditional Newar fashion, lashed to poles of bamboo balanced on their shoulders.

the Patan temple compound gate. There the god is greeted by the wife of the eldest *pānju*, the *thakāli pānjuni*, who welcomes Bungadya with the *lasakus pujā*, a welcoming ritual used on auspicious occasions for honored individuals.

In the five-month interval between the arrival of Bungadya in Patan and his bathing ceremony, two additional extensive three-part *pujās* are offered to Bungadya, Ikhaye dya, and Hayagriḃa Bhairab. Each of these starts in Patan and ends in Bungamati in the temple of Hayagriḃa Bhairab. Both of these *pujās* are called *Yacin kāyegu pujās*, a term used to refer to long night *pujās* performed in preparation for achieving a specific objective. In the first of these *pujās* all of the *pānjus* and their families are supposed to come for a small feast (*samay*) offered after the concluding Bhairab *pujā*. In the second, the feast is on a much smaller scale and the two *pānjus* who will ride on the chariot during the festival participate as *jajmans*.

During this interval between the palanquin procession and the annual bathing ceremony, these two *pānjus* also participate in an elaborate series of *pujās* to the eight *Aṣṭamātrkā* goddesses. The *Aṣṭamātrkā*s, as noted above in the description of the *kalaś pujā*, are considered to be important protective deities, and are commonly conceptualized as marking important boundaries of religious significance. In this ritual, called the *pīṭh pujā*, the participants make small offerings and the priest performs a dance *mudrā* at each of the *Aṣṭamātrkā pīṭhs* (literally, "seats") located along the twelve-year *jātrā* route from Bungamati to Patan. The *pīṭh pujā* begins and ends at Ikhaye dya, and is distinctive in that the two *pānjus* and the *jātrā jajman* all participate as *jajmans*, each contributing a separate *kalaś*,

mirror, and pigment container (*sinha: mū*) for use in each of the three *kalaś pujās* performed during its course.⁵⁷

Both the *pīth pujā* and the *yacin kāyegu pujās*, though they occur months before the *jātrā*, are linked with the *jātrā* from the perspectives of those who perform them. During the five-month interval between the procession to Patan and the annual bathing, the only major "god's work" (*dyā:yagu jyā*) which the *pānjus* must perform (beyond the routine daily rites) is linked with the *jātrā* and entails the worship of protective deities which accept blood offerings.

Removing the "life" from the Image

The first event in Bungadya's annual ritual cycle that is attended by large crowds is the bathing ceremony held in Lagankhel every year⁵⁸ on the first day of the dark half of *Baiśakh*. It is preceded by two ceremonies which employ *sādhana* to remove the spirit, or life, from the image and to transfer it to a large silver pot (*kwam*) where it will reside until the image has been renewed. The first of these is the *jīvan nyās pujā*, or "life transferral rite," which occurs the night before the bathing ceremony behind closed doors in the Ta Baha temple. In this ceremony, which lasts over two hours, the life spirit is drawn from the image through the

⁵⁷*Kalaś pujās* are offered at Ikhaye, the spot in Jawalakhel where the *rath* stops at the end of the *jātrā*, and an aniconic Ganesh south of Pulcowk on the way back to Bungamati.

⁵⁸Except during the twelve-year *jātrā* when it takes place on a special platform in Amarapur, to the west of Bungadya's temple.

meditative powers (*sādhana*) of the *Vajrācārya pānju* priest and transferred to a small silver *kalaś*.⁵⁹

Secret Pacification Ritual

After this transference has been accomplished, the principal *pujāri*, a *pānju* assistant, the *Śreṣṭhā jātrā* jajman and a *suwa* proceed to the bathing platform in Lagankhel to perform a secret pacification ritual called the *śānti āgam kilā pujā*. This rite involves a *kalaś pujā* and a second rite which the *pānju* assistant performs while concealed under a shawl; not even the officiating *pānju* is permitted to see this part of the ritual to which its name specifically refers.⁶⁰ Pacification, the main objective of the *pujā* as indicated by its name, seems appropriate in the light of the

⁵⁹Locke (1980:211) only uses the term "nyasa" when describing the re-investment of Janmadya with life in the initiation rites performed in Jana baha after the image has been bathed and restored. Bharati (1975:273) states that "nyasa (lit. placing down, depositing) is the process of placing one meditational entity into another, and this applies both to actual, physical, and to imagined entities...". It would appear that Locke is mistaken when he states that the spirit is drawn from the image of Bungadya on the day of the bathing (1980:262), apparently unaware of the *jīvan nyās pujā* which occurs the night before. He does note that "Some claim that when they finish painting the image they [the *Niyekhus*] give it a secret Hindu tantric initiation, though no one can confirm this as the *Nyekhus* (sic) do all of their work in secret" (1980:262-3, note 23). The *jīvan nyās pujā* may be what these informants were referring to, it being the only secret *pujā* performed after the painting is completed, but it is done with a Buddhist *pānju*. It is also conceivable that the spirit is drawn from the image twice, just as it is initiated twice (see below re: *Niyekhu's* and *pānju's daśa karma pujās*), however only the secret *pujā* is referred to as the *jīvan nyās*, an explicit reference to the movement of "life".

⁶⁰Due to the secrecy which surrounds this ritual, it is not certain what *kilā* refers to, though it probably refers to the making of rice balls used in death ceremonies. Joshi (1987:89) states that *kilā yāye* means "to make a *pinda*," the ball of rice offered to ancestors at funerals and during the commemoration of a death, or can be synonymous with performing this commemorative ceremony, or *śrāddha*. This seems appropriate given the secret treatment after bathing which suggests that the image is "dead".

fact that the deity is in a state of transition. The deity most likely to interfere and therefore require pacification is logically Bungadya's mother who has been deprived of her son and who is present in the tree by the bathing platform (or in the stone *maṇḍala* at its base).⁶¹ This logic is my own, however, and the motives of those who perform this secret rite must remain a matter of speculation.

Transferral of the "Life" of Bungadya to a Silver Urn

A brief but lavish *kalaś puṣṭi* performed in the afternoon before the bathing ceremony serves to transfer the spirit of Bungadya into a large silver urn (*Barma kwam*).⁶² During this *puṣṭi*, the *pāṇju* priest also summons four *nāga* serpent deities into the silver pots of water to be used in the bathing ceremony, and invokes four guardian deities into four other silver pots. These pots into which guardian deities have been summoned will be placed around the *Barma kwam* within the temple sanctum.

The temple attendant then dresses the *Barma kwam*, which was painted with facial features for the *kalaś puṣṭi*, with all the articles normally worn by Bungadya. During the period in which his image is being renewed, the *Barma kwam* (which serves as the vessel of Bungadya's spirit) occupies the place of Bungadya in the temple sanctum. Thus ensconced, the *Barma kwam* urn looks remarkably like Bungadya, except for the color of its face and swollen shape. Until

⁶¹There are numerous interpretations concerning the exact location of Bungadya's mother at this shrine which is named *māju sima* ("honored mother tree"). Some chronicles also refer to this shrine as "*Yogambara mandap*," another goddess associated with revenge.

⁶²I believe this name is derived from the all encompassing god "Brahma", used to refer to the huge size of the *kwaṃ* in which the spirit of Bungadya is kept.

the spirit of Bungadya is withdrawn from the *Barma kwam* and returned to the image, all normal daily *pujās* are performed to the *Barma kwam*, and the attendant distributes *prasād* from beneath the silver cover for Bungadya's feet, though no feet lie within.

The Annual Bathing Ceremony

This ceremony, which takes place in the late afternoon on the Lagankhei bathing platform, is normally attended by several thousand people and is one of the most popular events of the ritual cycle. It is also attended by the Malla King's proxy, his sword. After being fitted with a flower crown, the otherwise virtually undressed image is taken in a palanquin procession from the temple to the bathing platform. The procession is comprised of essentially the same individuals who escorted the god from Bungamati but includes the *Niyekhu* image painters as well.⁶³ Upon reaching the bathing platform, the *Niyekhus*⁶⁴ return to Ta Bahal to fetch the four silver water vessels into which the *nāgas* were invoked during the preceding *kalaś puja*.⁶⁵

⁶³The *pānjus* again carry the palanquin, not the *Niyekhus*, as described by Locke (1980:263).

⁶⁴Because there are only three *Niyekhus* currently involved in painting the image of Bungadya, *pānjus* and/or *suwa:s* may also participate in retrieving the water and bathing the image, as four people are required to do this.

⁶⁵The source(s) of the water used in these *kwaṃ* is a matter of some debate. Locke states that only water from the well in Ta Baha is used (1980:262), as some in fact is. The *pānjus* state that water is also brought from a sort of well in Bungamati called *nhawan gha* after its association with the bathing ceremony. There is also a tradition that water is brought from the well in Itum Baha. In any case it must be pure water *ni la:*), as opposed to water from pipes or tanks.

After placing the four water vessels in the corners of the bathing platform,⁶⁶ the *Niyekhus* and *pānju* assistants circumambulate the deity six times, following the *pānju* principal *pujāri* who performs elaborate dancing *mudras* facing outwards to the eight directions in worship of *nāga* deities.⁶⁷ During these circumambulations, those following the priest add *pāncamṛita*, the five "sacred nectars", comprised of milk, honey, ghee, sugar, and curds, to the silver water urns.⁶⁸ After the circumambulations are completed, the water bearers place the urns on their shoulders and await a signal from the priest. Prompted by his gesture of pouring water from his ritual conch shell the others suddenly douse the image with the contents of their urns, players of long processional horns blast their instruments, and members of the *Gurujuya paltan* fire two shots into the air. Some of the bath water is retrieved in a large tray placed at the bottom of the image. Those on the platform use this water "*prasād*" to spray the crowd, which eagerly presses forward in a rush to be so blessed.

The gunshots serve as the signal for the attendants in nearby Cakwadya baha to bathe Cakwadya in a similar fashion. This is the first major event of the annual ritual cycle which directly links these two gods. People leaving the bathing

⁶⁶Locke (1980:262) notes only two used in the bathing. The fact that *nāgas* are clearly engraved in four of the *kwam* suggests that four are always used.

⁶⁷These deities are worshipped during the first four circumambulations, the first of which honors a group of three *nāgas*, the second honors five, the third seven, and the last nine. The *pānju* who performed these rites for the two ceremonies I witnessed said that the next two circumambulations were "just *pujā*". With the exception of the final moments before the bathing, the priest never faced the image, suggesting that these final *pujās* were not directed to Bungadya, who is, in principle, located in the *Barma kwam* in the Ta Bahal temple. This *pānju* performed the principal *pujari* role two years in succession because of the frail health of the *vajrācārya pānju* next in line.

⁶⁸This ceremony is often referred to as the "*pāncamṛita māha snan*".

site of Bungadya typically pay their respects to Cakwadya before going home, as do the *Gurujuya Paltan* and the procession with the king's sword.

In the late evening the *pānju* priest and the *Niyekhus* perform a secret *pujā* to the image. Various kinds of evidence suggest that this *pujā* and the procession which brings the image back to Ta Baha are funerary rites similar to those performed for a human being.⁶⁹ It is forbidden for non-participants to witness this ritual or the procession which follows. If someone should happen to see either who should not, it is believed he or she would instantly die a horrible death.

I have witnessed only the preparations for this ritual,⁷⁰ which include making *pindas*, balls of rice or flour and other special ingredients which are offered to the deceased prior to cremation.⁷¹ Though this ritual is performed secretly for Bungadya, making and distributing *pindas* after Cobahadya's bathing ceremony are public events, and bits of the over-sized *pindas* are distributed to the crowd to

⁶⁹I am indebted to Father Locke for first drawing my attention to this possibility.

⁷⁰After which I was good naturedly, but firmly led away from the area which was essentially deserted.

⁷¹See Lewis (1984:307-331) for a detailed treatment of Newar Buddhist death rituals. *Pindas* are also used in annual *śraddha pujās* on behalf of the deceased. Among the other unusual articles used in the secret ritual performed after the bathing are ten small covered bronze ewers. These are brought to the bathing platform from Taleju's temple in the Patan palace on behalf of the king (apparently the Malla descendant but this is not clear). Priests from Harrasiddhi bring meat to be used in this ritual, perhaps to be included in the *pindas*, though this is not clear (Linda Iltis, personal communication, 1989).

be eaten as *prasād*.⁷² The midnight procession which brings the image of Bungadya back to a sequestered side chamber in the Ta Baha temple is also secret, but audible; the long horns used in funeral processions are played at this time, accompanied by drums, in a somber dirge.

In Cobaha (as well as in Janabahal), this procession is quite public. The image, prior to being placed in its palanquin, is wrapped from head to toe in a shroud, as would be a human corpse. The procession in Cobaha, which inches its way back to the temple, is preceded by women who lay lighted wicks in its path, a custom reminiscent of the Kathmandu *Matayā*: procession in honor of the dead.

It seems entirely likely that what transpires in public in Cobaha after the bathing of their *Lokeśwar* is essentially what occurs secretly in Patan after the bathing of Bungadya. With the bathing of the image comes the acknowledgement that the image is dead and must be brought back to life.⁷³

⁷²On the morning after the bathing of the image in 1984, the *Vajrācārya pānju* who had performed the secret *pujā* the night before and the *pānju* who was to sit on the right of the god during the upcoming *jātrā* came to visit me and offer me *prasād* from the previous evening's ritual. Among the items they gave me was a bit of dough, which they told me I should eat without touching it to my lips. This, surely, was a bit of a *pinda*. They made this visit on their way to offer similar *prasād* to the current king of Nepal.

⁷³Why this acknowledgement is public in the festivals of Janmadya, Naladya, and Cobahadya, but not Cakwadya or Bungadya is, presumably, privileged knowledge. It is possible that the principle of secrecy protecting the unprepared public is operative here in more ways than one. The popular devotion to Bungadya is strongly linked with one image; a particular incarnation among many for the sophisticated, perhaps, but a rain god associated with particular places and events for others. The sight of the image of Bungadya being treated as a corpse would, perhaps, be dismaying to those unacquainted with the subtle principles involved in *sādhana* or the notion that the physical manifestation of a god is a receptacle for power and aid for meditation.

Painting the image

One week after the image is bathed it is brought out of seclusion and placed inside the eastern doorway of the temple, where it will be painted over the next week. The period of seclusion prior to being painted is popularly referred to as *bāhrā: cwanegu*, a period of ritual seclusion undergone by Newar girls before menarche.⁷⁴ This is a popular name which is unlikely to have any bearing on whatever esoteric significance sequestering the image in a dark room may have. It does not fit in with the sequence of other life cycle rites which occur a week after the image is brought out. The association of this seclusion with a female rite is consistent, however, with the popular name *ini yāyegu* (primary symbolic marriage of young girl to a *bel* fruit) used metonymically to refer to the *daśa karma puḷā*: a ritual which includes many other life-cycle rites, both male and female. Contrary to the human *bāhrā: cwanegu*, there are no *puḷās* performed upon the image's return to the outer world.

The painting process performed after the bathing is slow and deliberate, and lasts over a period of seven days. The *Niyekhus* once again obliterate the facial features and patch the upper torso with clay from Mhaipi Ajima. The paint is prepared by the *Niyekhus* from numerous ingredients, including ground fish scales; not an acknowledgement of Bungadya's identity as Matsyendranath, but a means of producing a brilliant sheen. The *Niyekhus* maintain a state of purity while painting the image, taking care not to touch anyone else, and fasting each day until the day's painting is done. Prior to painting the image each day and upon completing the day's work, the *Niyekhu* painters bow to the image and touch their

⁷⁴See Toffin (1984:140-41) and Lewis (1984:276-78) for details concerning the *bāhrā: cwanegu* rite.

heads to its feet. The status of the image is clearly respected as a deity in some respects, though technically it is an inert object until it is reconsecrated.

The Ten-fold Initiation and Reconsecration of Bungadya (*Daśa karma puṇā*)

The name of this ritual is derived from the term *daśa samskara*, or the ten rites of passage. Locke has provided a detailed account of the *daśa karma puṇā* of Janmadya, and suggests that the *daśa karma* for Bungadya is the same (1980:264). Though it is true that the same life cycle rites are performed, several major differences exist which are relevant to our understanding of the relationship between Bungadya, the king, and the people who serve them both. I will briefly summarize the events of the Bungadya ritual and note, if pertinent, differences between it and the *daśa karma puṇā* of Janmadya.⁷⁵

Protective Rites Prior to the The Ten-fold Initiation

In preparation for the re-consecration of the image the next day, an extremely elaborate *kalaś puṇā* is performed using seventy clay vessels, into sixty-eight of which protective deities are invoked. These vessels are arranged in a large square in front of the Ta Baḥa temple, defining a space into which people (other than the *pānjus*) are technically not allowed for a period of nearly twenty-four hours after the *kalaś puṇā* is completed.⁷⁶ Sixty-eight of these vessels (*gwamca*) are decorated with the symbols of the tantric deities which will be bound,

⁷⁵It would appear that Locke's (1980:208-222) account is primarily based on textual sources, as he cites them throughout and gives Sanskrit names for life cycle rites which participants in Bungadya's *daśa karma*, at least, usually refer to by their Newari names.

⁷⁶A *pānju* must fast while maintaining an all night vigil inside this square of *puṇā* pots to insure that nothing is disturbed.

through *sādhana*, within them.⁷⁷ The larger of the two remaining largest pots is decorated with an image of the *vajra* and bell (*ghaṇṭā*),⁷⁸ and the second bears an image of Ganesh. Some of the *pujā* articles to be used in the *daśa karma pujā* are also blessed during the course of this ritual, as are hundreds of balls of *pasukā*, the five-colored thread which is usually distributed as *prasād* at the end of *pujās*.

The Feast for Dogs (*Khicā bhu*)

While the *kalaś puja* is being performed in Ta Baha, another series of protective rituals is performed in Bungamati. As part of a *pujā* conducted by two *Vajrācārya pānjus*,⁷⁹ members of the butcher caste sacrifice a buffalo at the Ikhaye Yogambara, bleed it through an incision in the back of the neck, and then slaughter it. They cut the limbs and head off the carcass, which they then skin. The rib cage is emptied of viscera and set aside. The *pānjus* offer pieces of meat to a few favored dogs, many of which gather around the carnage. This offering to the dogs (*khicā*) is the source of the *pujā*'s name. The dogs are fed in honor of the four Bhairabs which, in the form of dogs, carried the *kalaś* of Bungadya into the valley. It is said that the entire buffalo used to be offered to the dogs, save the

⁷⁷Each pot is also inscribed with the name of the individual entitled to take it home, including the *pānjus* participating in the *jātrā*, the *subba*, and representatives from among the *gākhu* brakemen, the *suwa*:, the *Bārāhī*, and others. Pots such as these are often used in rituals, and are taken home by participants who often hang them under the eaves of their houses for protection. Locke incorrectly states that there are 63 "pots" (1980:264), probably because some people had already claimed possession of their designated pots before he counted them.

⁷⁸I believe, but could not confirm, that this vessel is used to invoke Vajrasattva, whose symbols are the *vajra* thunderbolt and the bell.

⁷⁹The usual *Vajrācārya* priest who officiates at most of the major rituals is, at this time, performing the *kalaś puja* in Ta Baha.

skin, limbs, head, rib cage, and some of the blood, but because buffalos are now so expensive,⁸⁰ they save almost all of the meat for a feast.⁸¹

The butchers then proceed to the bottom of the steps of Hayagriba Bhairab's temple and re-assemble the carcass, placing a bowl of blood inside the rib cage, which they then drape with the skin they have saved. Head and limbs are put in place and the *pānju* officiant blesses the reassembled buffalo with the ritual normally used for sacrificial animals, the same *pujā* which was offered to the buffalo half an hour earlier while it was still alive. This preparatory *pujā* completed, the butcher assistants lift the skin draped over the rib cage, extract the bowl of blood, spray it onto the temple steps, and take it to Hayagriba within the temple, thereby sacrificing the same buffalo twice.⁸² It is said that the priests used to be

⁸⁰The buffaloe used in this sacrifice in 1984 cost 1,500 Rs., approximately \$125.00 U.S. dollars.

⁸¹This sacrifice is one of the more chaotic I have witnessed, with blood stained knife wielding participants angrily arguing over the division of meat surrounded by howling, fighting dogs. In the midst of this confusion, a friend informed me of what was to transpire in the form of an equally confusing riddle, "They will kill two buffaloes thrice." (*Nimha myey swoka siye.*)

⁸²A story is told in Bungamati to explain this practice. "Bhimsen [who is embodied in a pillar just outside Hayagriba's sanctum] and Hayagriba were *twāy* [ritual brothers]. Once Hayagriba invited Bhimsen to a feast, but when Bhimsen arrived, Hayagriba had eaten everything but the skin and bones. Angry, Bhimsen then invited Hayagriba to a feast at Ikhaye, but stood over the passageway leading to Ikhaye. This made it impossible for Hyagriba to attend without walking under Bhimsen and suffering the insult of having Bhimsen *hācām gāye* [be situated above] him. Hayagriba therefore called upon Hanuman [the monkey god who came to the rescue of Rama in the Ramayana] to knock Bhimsen from his perch." In commemoration of this episode, participants in the Bhairab procession at *Mohini* (Desain, Nep.) carry long bamboo poles when they pass through the entrance leading to Ikhaye.

able to bring the reassembled buffalo back to life, but nowadays, it being the *Kali yuga*, no-one has this power any longer.⁸³

Another buffalo is then sacrificed to a second Bhairab (Hakumha Bhairab, the "black" Bhairab) located behind the shrine of Hayagriba and not visible to the public. A niche in the rear wall of the temple is doused with the blood of the second buffalo. Representatives from the *Guthī Samsthan* oversee the butchering of the meat, and after enjoying a feast in Bungamati, bring most of it back to Ta Baha where it will be consumed in massive feast held for many of those with officially recognized *jātrā* responsibilities.⁸⁴

The following evening, the *pānju* priest performs another protective rite, referred to as *jā bhu* ("cooked rice feast") on the eastern side of the temple in Ta Baha. In this rite fierce deities are summoned in a *kalaś pujā* and offered a feast of cooked rice, ginger, black lentils, and inflated intestines.⁸⁵ Following this protective rite, the *daśa karma* begins.

⁸³See Lewis (1984:391) for a description of a similar sacrifice offered during *Mohini* to Annapurna in Assan tole. In this case the buffaloe, which is reassembled at Annapurna's *āgam chem*, is said to have been revived with *mantras* in the past.

⁸⁴This is one occasion on which the people of Bungamati seemed to resent the interference of the *Guthī Samsthan*. In an argument which erupted over the distribution of meat, angry *Bungepim* referred to them as "*pinepim*," or outsiders. The buffaloes used in the sacrifices were provided by the *Guthī Samsthan*.

⁸⁵Untouchable *Pore* come to collect the rice after the *pujā* is completed. This may be the equivalent of the *daśa krodha pujā* to which Locke refers with reference to Janmadya (1980:209), though only nine baskets of rice are offered in the *jā bhu*.

The Life Cycle Rites with the Image Painters

Bungadya actually goes through two separate *daśa karma pujās*, the first performed with the *Niyekhus*, and the second with the *pānjus* who will sit to the right and left side of Bungadya in the chariot (*jhal* and *khal pānjus*).⁸⁶ The first *daśa karma pujā* differs from the second in that the former begins by transferring the *jīvan* from the *barma kwam* vessel and replacing it into the renewed image of Bungadya.⁸⁷ This is not repeated in the course of the second *daśa karma* with the *pānjus*.

An important feature of Bungadya's first *daśa karma* which is absent in the *daśa karma* of Janmadya is the crucial involvement of an individual known as the king of Bhaktapur (*Khwape juju*) who is considered to be a descendant of Narendradeva.⁸⁸ Narendradeva is represented not only by his descendant, but by the sword he carries. As soon as the life of Bungadya has been returned from the *barma kwam* to the image,⁸⁹ "Narendradeva" is summoned to perform his role of

⁸⁶The terms *jhal* and *khal* are commonly used to refer to neighbors whose houses abut to the right and left of one's house; *jhaway* and *khaway* meaning "right" and "left", respectively. The Newar proclivity to toy with the ambiguities in their language leads some to suggest that the term *jhal* refers to the fact that this *pānju* sprays the morning *nitya pujā* crowds with blessed water, or *jhal*.

⁸⁷This also constitutes a major difference between the Bungadya *daśa karma* and that performed for Janmadya as described by Locke in which the life cycle rites are performed prior to the re-installation of the *jīvan*, or life. The fact that the life-cycle rites are performed on two separate occasions for Bungadya also distinguishes the Patan rites from those performed in Kathmandu.

⁸⁸The actual lineage claiming Narendradeva as an ancestor died out in 1982, so now a *Śresthā* associated with the Taleju temple in Bhaktapur plays his role. He is nevertheless referred to as the *Khwape juju*, the "King of Bhaktapur."

⁸⁹The priest strings a five-colored string (*pasukā*) from the mouth of the *barmha kwam* to a *vajra* which he places on top of the head of the image in order to delineate the route the life force will follow in response to the *mantras* he utters.

opening the eyes of the image "with his sword".⁹⁰ While holding the sword in one hand, he blesses a paint brush with the other, which a *Niyekhu* then uses to define the deity's pupils; typically the first step in converting an inert image into a deity imbued with power. A representative of the King who is said to have first brought Bungadya to Nepal and a high-caste Hindu who claims descent from those who served the king's court⁹¹ are thus responsible for the initial rite which brings the image of Bungadya back from death each year.

The *daśa karma puṣā*, which follows these initial rites, includes not only the *ihi puṣā* as it is popularly dubbed, but also rituals associated with birth, the first rice feeding, the Hindu *vrata bandha* and its Buddhist equivalent, the *bare chuyegu* male initiation rite, the advanced initiation for the *Vajrācāryas*, and other rites of passage.

Various foods are offered to the deity during these life cycle rites. One food briefly mentioned by Locke as the first fed to Janmadya includes a medicinal substance, *imu-chaku*, which he states is "...given to women in labor..." , after which "...the god is considered to have been born again in the image." (1980:211) This reference has inspired Kōlver in a recent paper to consider the image as a "...receptacle to house the embryo, i.e. the mother." (Kōlver 1985:9) The

⁹⁰This is a popular explanation. The role of "Narendradeva" is a well-known facet of this ritual cycle. He makes the twelve-kilometer journey from Bhaktapur on foot, dressed in a conspicuous costume bearing a silk-clad ceremonial sword, accompanied by his bearers who carry *puṣā* equipment and offerings.

⁹¹The *Niyekhu* derive their name from their importance in the palace at Bhaktapur. Narendradeva is popularly considered to have held his court in Bhaktapur, though history suggests otherwise.

substance to which Locke refers, also known as *sisā pālu*,⁹² is also the first substance fed to Bungadya, and this feeding occurs immediately after the *jīvan* has entered the image and its eyes are opened. *Sisā pālu* is the substance which is offered to Ajima (the protectrice of children) and then distributed as *prasād* among the family after the child is born (cf. Nepali 1965:89, Toffin 1984:294, Manandhar 1986:262). I have never heard Bungadya referred to in any context, ritual, mythic, or otherwise, as a mother. The presentation of *sisā pālu*, though it acknowledges a birth, in no way links the image with pregnancy or motherhood. It is simply an appropriate beginning for the *daśa samskara* rites.

At a later point in the *daśa samskara* rites, Bungadya is fed many different kinds of food as part of his first rice feeding. Five trays of cooked rice and other foods are brought into the temple, and bits from each are offered to the deity. Prominently displayed on the top of the first of these trays is the right jaw portion of the skull of the buffalo sacrificed to Hayagriba in Bungamati the evening before. This is the part of the skull offered to the most honored guest at a feast.⁹³

At the conclusion of the *daśa karma* rites, the image, festooned with the numerous trappings acquired over the course of these life-cycle rites, is returned to its usual sanctum. The *pānju* principal *pujāri*, with the usual *Śreṣṭhā jajman*, then offers an extensive *hwama pujā* in honor of Bungadya. He is assisted by

⁹²Locke describes "*imu-chaku*" as "...mixture of molasses, ginger, and *jwanu*..." which he defines as a "...medicinal herb used in ayurvedic medicine for abdominal complaints (1980:211). Nepali defines "*sisā palu*" as "...containing jaggery [*chaku* = molasses], *Imu* (*corum copticum* seeds), ginger, *baji*, black pulse and fruits..." (1965:89). Manandhar (1984:262) defines *sisāpālu* as "...customary offerings of pieces of ginger, salt ghee [sic], molasses at a feast four days after childbirth in a household."

⁹³The implications of this offering with respect to Bungadya's *ahimsa* status and his connection with sacrifice will be discussed at length below. See Toffin (1984:104 and 1976) regarding details of the *sī kā: bhu*, or "feast of the head."

several other *pānjus* who simultaneously read different portions of the *Gunakāraṇḍavyūha* ("The Exhaustive Descriptions of the Basket of Merits [of Avalokitesvara]" (Locke 1980:407).⁹⁴ Even using the time-saving technique of simultaneous recitation, this *hwama* does not usually end before two-thirty or three in the morning after six hours of continuous ritual. These latter rites are attended by only a few individuals, though a small crowd is usually on hand for the *daśa samskara* rites, particularly the unveiling of the image and the *ihi puḍā* portions. Just as the concluding *hwama puḍā* is ending, a group of singers resume their daily sunrise singing of the *Nāmasaṃgītī* in the presence of Bungadya, a practice they discontinue from the day the image is bathed until after this *daśa karma*. The second *daśa karma* performed with the *pānjus* two days later is at a more convenient time, and attracts more onlookers.

"Bringing Swayambhu" and the Sacrifice to Yogambara at Santipur

The following evening ten *pānjus*⁹⁵ set out for Swayambhu, one of Buddhism's most sacred shrines, to perform a series of rituals and return with "Simbhu bhagwan" (Swayambhu - the self-existent Buddha from whom all other Buddhas emanated) so that he too may have a place in the *jātrā*. They bring with

⁹⁴Associated with this *hwama* is a secret rite, performed by assistants under the cover of a shawl which resembles the *śanti āagam kīlā puḍā* performed at the bathing platform two weeks earlier. It also involves overturning five small clay vessels filled with rice beer offerings appropriate for fierce deities.

⁹⁵These do not include the *jhal* and *khal pānjus*, but do include their assistants, the two *bhayas*.

them a small image of Swayambhu and a *vajra* representing Vajrasattva⁹⁶ from Kwa Baha which they bring back to Bungadya the following morning.⁹⁷ Their journey is slow, for the pace is set by a goat who must go to Swayambhu (about a five kilometer walk) of its own accord to be secretly sacrificed to Yogambara.⁹⁸ The *pānjus* who will ride with Bungadya in his chariot bless the goat for this sacrifice in front of Bungadya in Ta Baha before the party of other *pānjus* sets out for Swayambhu. Upon reaching Swayambhu, prior to the sacrifice, secret rituals are performed at shrines of the five cosmic elements, earth, wind, fire, water, and space which surround the massive Swayambhu *stūpa*.⁹⁹

⁹⁶Vajrasattva is considered to be the sixth *dhyānī* (meditation) Buddha. *Vajrācāryas* consider him to be the priest of the *pāñca dhyānī* Buddhas, and thus regard him as their guru (see Locke 1980:83, Bhattacharyya 1968:74-5). Vajrasattva is summoned at the beginning of all *kalaś puṣṭi* as part of the *Gurumaṇḍala* rite. His symbols are the *vajra* and the bell.

⁹⁷David Gellner has informed me that rather than carry an image of Vajrasattva, as reported by Locke (1980:265) the *pānjus* take only his emblematic *vajra*.

⁹⁸I am indebted to Niels Gutschow (personal communication, 1987) for identifying the god to whom this goat is sacrificed. He came upon the remains of the sacrifice near Santipur at a shrine normally used as a refuse heap, but identified as Yogambara and cleared for the occasion.

⁹⁹Vasupur, Vayupur, Agnipur, Nagpur, and Santipur, respectively.

The sacrifice to Yogambara at Santipur on Swayambhu hill recalls the intimate ties between the *pānjus* and Swayambhu through Bandhudatta,¹⁰⁰ as well as the connection between the worship of Bungadya and the *āgam dya* of his *baha*. The requirement that the sacrificial goat walk of its own volition to the scene of its demise is an elaborate expression of a principle which is involved in all sacrifice; the victim must offer itself. Normally the animal signifies its consent by shaking itself. This is often stimulated by the priest, who may insert some grain in the animal's ear as he whispers a *mantra* into it, or sprinkle the animal with water. I have only twice witnessed a sacrifice in which the animal did not "give consent," and I have seen animals rejected for sacrifice because they did not offer themselves to be killed.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Locke cites a legend recounted by Asakaji Vajracarya (2024 B.S.:35-6) which maintains that Yogambara was attended by Santikar Acarya, the founder of Swayambu and *guru* of Bandhudatta "... in a previous existence at which time Yogambara predicted the coming of Avalokitesvara Karunamaya to Nepal." (1980:264, note 25) The *pānjus* also claim that the Bungamati Yogambara was originally brought from Swayambu (cf. Locke 1985:238), which was in turn brought from Mhaipi (Locke 1985:398-99). Both the *pānjus* at Bungamati and the *saṃgha* members at Swayambhu (who regard the Adhi Buddha of the Swayambhu *stūpa* as their *kwāpā dyā*;) state that if one *saṃgha* should die out, members of the other would take over the responsibilities of their deceased counterparts (Locke 1985:399). Ratnaraj Vajracarya has published an account which states that Bandhudatta's descendants and the priests of Swayambhu were appointed to be the attendants to Karunamaya. This version also specifically mentions that Narendradeva and Bandhudatta had consecrated the chariot by performing *pujās* at Swayambhu (n.d.:24).

¹⁰¹In the course of my research I observed over one hundred and fifty sacrifices. I have on several occasions observed *pujari* wait thirty minutes or more for the animal to "offer itself."

The Panjus' Ten Life-Cycle Rites

Shortly after the procession bearing "Swayambhu" and Vajrasattva returns from the all-night rituals at Swayambhu, the *jhal* and *khal pānjus* (attendants to Bungadya while in the *rath*) participate in a repetition of the *daśa samskara* rites which were performed with the *Niyekhus* two nights before. They do not repeat the transferal of the *jīvan* from the silver vessels, as the image is already "alive," but do repeat the *sisā pālu* offerings associated with birth rituals. This *daśa karma* is far better attended,¹⁰² as it occurs in the morning at seven or eight when more people are about, and because the daily morning rituals have resumed in the normal fashion after the first *daśa karma*. It is followed by the same *hwama pujā* which was performed after the *Niyekhu's daśa karma*, though no secret *pujā* is conducted on this occasion.

Koduwa Mela and Sacrifice to Diladya

The day of the *pānjus' daśa karma pujā* is also considered "Mother's day," or *Matutirtha*; a day on which one should go to "see one's Mother's face" (*Maya kwa swaye*). Accordingly, the *pānju* who is to sit on the right of Bungadya during the *jātrā* (*jhal pānju*), principal *pujari*, accompanied by a *suwa*: and others, go to Koduwa on this day to pay their respects to Bungadya's mother and to "bring back Bungadya." Koduwa is the gorge through which the Bagmati flows out of the

¹⁰²Close observation of this ritual is virtually impossible because the only clear view is provided by a small window to the right of the main sanctum. The presence of the morning musicians makes it impossible to stand on the temple plinthe in the location necessary to view this ritual. To the degree I have seen it, it is an exact repetition of the life cycle rites; and the *pānjus* refer to it as "their" *daśa karma*. The public is aware that the ritual is going on, and attempt to view Bungadya in the trappings normally worn by a young girl undergoing *ihī yāye*.

valley,¹⁰³ and is considered to be the point at which Bungadya's mother and her fellow inhabitants of Kamarup turned back after receiving gifts from Bandhudatta and Narendradeva along with the promise that her son would be the guardian deity of Nepal.¹⁰⁴ Some residents of Bungamati refer to Koduwa as the location of Bungadya's *ta:chem*, or natal home. Patan residents tend to refer to Bungamati in this manner.¹⁰⁵

A young woman accompanies the procession to Koduwa as a representative of Lalita Jyapu. Called *Mālini*, or "female gardener," she is considered to be the descendant of Lalita Jyapu who went on the original mission to retrieve Bungadya from Kamarup. The other two members of this trio are represented by the *Vajrācārya* priest (Bandhudatta) and the *jhal pānju* (Narendradeva). This party of three, plus the *suwa:*, other assistants, and friends, spend the night in a shelter (maintained by the *Guthī Samsthan* for this purpose) so that they may commence a long series of rituals at sunrise the next morning. *Mālini*, the two *pānjus*, and the *suwa:* are all in a state of ritual purity, and must not share the straw mat upon which they sit and sleep with anyone else. The *Mālini* dresses completely in red, the color worn by the *pānjus* and supposedly the color of the inhabitants of Kamarup, as well as the color of Bungadya. She fasts for four

¹⁰³Cobar is often considered the point of egress from the valley, though it is actually the break in the ridge at Koduwa, about six miles south of Bungamati.

¹⁰⁴Koduwa is also described as the point at which Bandhudatta summoned Bungadya, in the form of a bee, into the *kalaś*. Both events are re-enacted at Koduwa.

¹⁰⁵This is one of several expressions, including the popular "*ihi pujā*" label applied to the series of *daśa karma* rites, in which the female aspect of the sexually ambiguous Bungadya is emphasized, for the term *ta:chem* is most often used to refer to the natal home of a married woman.

days prior to making the fourteen kilometer walk to Koduwa, and is considered by some to be imbued with the "spirit" of Bungadya.¹⁰⁶

The first *pujā* performed the next morning is to Bungadya's mother, represented by a bas relief image of her hand, carved in a rock formation on the eastern wall of the gorge. This *pujā* is combined with summoning the *nāgas*, a feature which also precedes the river *pujās* of Naladya, Cobahadya, and Janmadya. The priest and his assistants then descend to the river's edge, where the priest sprinkles flower blossoms into the river which Malini and the other *pānju* then retrieve down-stream in silver *kalaśes*. This is considered to be a re-enactment of the moment when Bungadya, in the form of a bee, was captured in a *kalaś* by Bandhudatta.¹⁰⁷ It is the climax of the festival and is attended by about one hundred people, some of whom come from Patan and Bungamati for the occasion. A few wade into the water downstream and plunge into the river the instant the flowers are released. Most simply stand on the banks of the river and splash themselves and one another at the auspicious moment.

The *pujā* participants then return to the shelter and perform a *kalaś pujā* in honor of the *rācheses* (demons, ghosts) from Kamrup. This is followed by a secret sacrifice,¹⁰⁸ offered by residents of a nearby village, Danwar Gaon, who are known

¹⁰⁶One of the children in the party was admonished not to refer to the *Mālini* by her given name, but to refer to her as "Karunamaya" until Karunamaya is put on his *rath*. There is no indication that she is considered to be possessed by Bungadya (or Karunamaya), however.

¹⁰⁷A *Tuladhar* informant in Bungamati suggested that jasmin flowers were used by Bandhudatta to lure Bungadya, in the form of a bee, into the *kalaś*, and therefore jasmin flowers are used in the river *pujā*.

¹⁰⁸Informants tell me that it used to be quite easy to perform this sacrifice secretly, for the area was dense jungle only twenty years ago. Now they must shield the sacrifice with an umbrella and slaughter the goat behind a large rock.

as *Danwar* and consider themselves to be descendants of the inhabitants of Kamarup who came with Bungadya.¹⁰⁹ This sacrifice and the *pujā* which precedes it are offered to a series of aniconic stones generally referred to as *Diladya*, but which the *pānjus* identify as *Yogambara*.¹¹⁰ This sacrifice is followed by another series of offerings made by the *pānjus* and a *Danwar* to a long series of gods associated with different spots in the landscape, a re-enactment of the distribution of gifts to the numerous beings who accompanied Bungadya's mother.

After this, the *pānjus*, *suwa:*, and *mālīni* break their fasts with a *pālan*.¹¹¹ Then a small feast is prepared from the sacrificial goat. Under no circumstances is any remainder of this meal to be taken back to Patan, for anyone who does so is considered likely to die, vomiting blood.¹¹² A procession then forms to escort Bungadya back to Patan in a re-enactment of the triumphant procession which first brought Bungadya to Nepal. The *suwa:* carries an umbrella over the *kalaśes* borne by *Malini* and the *jajman* in honor of their divine status. With horns blaring, the procession follows the course of the river, actually wading along the river bed

¹⁰⁹Every house in Danwar Gaon is expected to contribute to the purchase of the sacrificial goat. Previously, the entire area around Koduwa was the *birta* (tax free land granted by the King) of Ananda Shamsheer Rana. Until about forty years ago, his descendants provided the goat for sacrifice.

¹¹⁰"*Dhila*" is a term used when bidding a respected person goodbye, though I do not know if this is the derivation of the name. No one could offer any other meaning other than to say that the god was also *Yogambara*.

¹¹¹The same meal eaten by the *pānjus* prior to carrying the god to Patan, though no cooked rice was served.

¹¹²A natural stone bridge over a tributary to the Bagmati marks the boundary beyond which this food cannot be taken. I once stopped at this bridge after witnessing this sacrifice and participating in the feast thereafter to eat some *baji* which I could not eat before leaving. The son of the *jhal pānju* who was with me insisted that I empty all my pockets and backpack after we ate to insure that I was carrying nothing more.

at some points, so that the denizens of Kamarup will be unable to follow them. Residents along the way wait by the route with containers, hoping to receive a bit of water from the *kalaśes* in which Bungadya is believed to be present.¹¹³ The bearers of the two *kalaśes* are welcomed at Ta Baha by the wife of the eldest *pānju* (*pānjuni thakālī*) and many others who await "the god."

The transformation of the image to god is now complete. The notion that the god must be retrieved from a river in addition to being reinstalled from a *kalaś* is most fully expressed in the mythology and festival of Cobahadya, but is also present in the festivals of Bungadya, Naladya and Janmadya.¹¹⁴ The elaborate propitiation of Bungadya's mother and her compatriots is not a feature of the other *jātrās*, but the invocation of protective deities, particularly Bhairab(s), is. It is only after these and other preparatory rites are performed, many of which guard against malevolent deities, that the image may be placed in the *rath*. On the afternoon of the Koduwa *mela*, in the company of the usual members of the palanquin procession, Bungadya is brought to the *rath* in Pulchowk and placed inside. This is the day known as *Bungayā*.

¹¹³People I encountered waiting for the procession invariably asked "*Dyā: gana tenke?*" ("Where has the god reached?").

¹¹⁴The river *pujā* for Janmadya is different in that it occurs before the bathing. *Kalaś* and *hwama pujās* are performed on a sand bar in the middle of the Visnumati river the night before the bathing. Though Locke (1980:206) is correct in stating that the bathing water is collected at this time, that is only one of several functions of the three hours of rituals performed there. These rites involve three silver pots which subsequently take the places of Janmadya and his two consorts in the temple just as the *Barma kwam* occupies the place of Bungadya. These pots are used to retrieve flowers from the Visnumati in the same sort of river *pujā* performed for Bungadya, Cobahadya, and Naladya. The secret *pujā* which is performed in the Jana Baha *āgam* after the river *pujā* probably includes the *jīvan nyās pujā*, which is also performed behind closed doors for Bungadya. As is also the case for the bathing of these other gods, *nāgas* are summoned into the pots of water used to bathe Janmadya.

The Installation of Bungadya in the Chariot (*Bungayā*)

Bungadya and his *pānju* attendants begin their residence in the *rath* in the late afternoon of the first day of the bright lunar fortnight of *Baiśakh*. This is the first event of the actual chariot festival and attracts thousands of onlookers. Included among those attending is the Patan Kumari, a living incarnation of the goddess Taleju who is considered the tutelary deity of the King. The Patan Kumari, who also witnesses the bathing ceremony, is brought in a procession to be present each day the *rath* is moved. In the procession which brings Bungadya to the *rath*, the descendant of the Patan Malla King carries the ceremonial sword of his ancestors, as does the descendant of Narendradeva from Bhaktapur who, in addition, bears the silver foot cover of Bungadya on his head.

Shortly after the god is installed in the *rath*, the brakemen offer the first of a series of sacrifices to the *rath* wheels. These brakemen, called *gākhus*, have the most perilous job of the *jātrā*.¹¹⁵ They are responsible for steering and stopping the *rath* by shoving large wooden blocks with sapling handles under the rolling wheels.¹¹⁶ During the twelve year *jātrā* it is not unusual for one or more of the *Gākhus* to be seriously injured or even killed during the difficult trip to and from Bungamati. They are therefore particularly mindful of the wrathful Bhairabs embodied in the wheels of the *rath*. They appease these Bhairabs with the blood of animals lest it be their own that is taken. On *Bungayā*, the *Gākhus* sacrifice a

¹¹⁵The *gākhus* are members of a *guthī*, eight of whom participate in the *jātrā* each year. The *Guthī Samsthān* does not simply appoint twelve *gyāpus* each year as reported by Locke (1980:268).

¹¹⁶In a curious manifestation of what must have been long-distance observation, Lobsiger-Dellenbach (1953) reported that four trees were brought to the *rath*, prompting me in an earlier paper to speculate on their relation to the *rath*'s tree-like form. These "trees" must have been the sapling handles of the *ghās* to which the *gākhus* customarily leave greenery attached.

sheep and circumambulate the *rath*, squirting blood on each of its wheels. After this sacrifice, a *Rājopadhyāy* Brahmin, who will play a largely ceremonial role in directing the pulling of the *rath*, symbolically pulls the *rath* for the first time. In a variation of the *sāhit halegu* performed in Bungamati five months earlier, he loops a five colored string from the god to the front of the chariot and back again, breaks it, and distributes pieces of the string as *prasād*. This fulfills the requirement that the *rath* be pulled this day.

The First Pulling of the Chariot

In 1983, the residents of Pulchowk revived an old tradition of pulling the chariot early in the morning of the day after *Bungayā*. This was done spontaneously without the knowledge of the officials of the *Guthī Samsthan* who normally coordinate the movements of the *rath*. Pulchowk residents¹¹⁷ offered several reasons for resuming this custom, the most common being that a new resthouse (*phalca*, or *patti*) had been completed that year in the place of another, long defunct, that used to be located where the *rath* was traditionally stopped that first day.¹¹⁸ Since the resthouse was restored, they reasoned, so was the custom of pulling the *rath* up to it. Others maintained that a resident of Pulchowk had a dream which dictated to her that the *rath* should be pulled this day in observance of the old custom. Some of the *pānjus* attributed the change to the new *subba* who, as a Newar, they considered to be more attentive to detail than his non-

¹¹⁷Pulchowk is a densely settled ridge at the western most edge of urban Patan, populated chiefly by *jyāpu* farmers.

¹¹⁸A recently published nineteenth century chronicle recounting stories of past *jātrās* mentions this custom and refers to the resting house as *maṇḍala phalca*, suggesting its link with one of the places where the *rath* stops. These points are typically marked with what is popularly called a *maṇḍap*, or *maṇḍala*.

Newar predecessor.¹¹⁹ In any case, this custom has been re-established, and the chariot is now pulled every year to the new resthouse in Pulchowk on the morning of the day after Bungaya.

Pulling the Rath to the Four Destinations

In the afternoon of the next day, Bungadya is "received" by Cakwadya, in his smaller chariot, who then leads Bungadya on the first leg of his tour through Patan. Boys pull the Cakwadya chariot from Cakwadya Baha nearly to Pulchowk, turn the chariot around, and lead the way toward the center of Patan. They stop at Ga Baha, the first official halting point on the *jātrā* route. This begins a series of events which are linked to the traditional route of the *jātrā* and timed to coincide with the arrival of Bungadya at four major stopping points along the way.

Every day during the procession through Patan, the same key personnel come to take their places on the *rath*. The sword bearer representing the Patan Malla king is escorted to the *rath* by his usual retinue and the *Gurujuya paltan*. The "king" and his staff and torch bearers then take their places on the *rath* outside the sanctum in which the god and his *jhal* and *khal pānju* attendants are situated. The four *bhaya* and *nhaya pānju* assistants also sit outside the sanctum of the *rath* on the balcony-like structure (*khajula*) which extends from the sides of the enclosed shrine. Two fly-whisk bearers, who wave their yak-tail whisks when the *rath* is under way, stand on either side of the front door of the sanctum.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹In fact, the *subba* was as surprised as I that the *rath* was pulled that morning.

¹²⁰Two policemen bearing rifles are also generally present on the *rath*. Several police rotate in shifts to maintain a presence on or near the *rath* day and night throughout the festival.

Two *Yangwal* vine-lashers, the only individuals permitted to climb the *rath*'s spire, ride above the chariot sanctum structure to direct those pulling at long ropes (*jangala*) leading to the top of the *rath* in order to keep it erect. Two *Rājopadhyāy* Hindu priests stand below the main shrine structure of the *rath* on its long central beam, or yoke, called the *dhwamā*. They are the "official" directors of the crowds that pull the *rath*, though in reality that role is played by young *jyāpu* men who take turns directing the crowds from the front-most part of the *rath* at the tip of the *dhwamā*. Four *gākhu* brakemen take their places with their wooden-chock brakes on the ground just in front of the massive wheels. Once all of these people are in place, the *guthī samsthan subba* climbs onto the *rath* and sprinkles the *gākhus* with water in a brief blessing, and the pulling may begin.

Generally, those who pull the *rath* come from the area to which the *rath* is going. The crowd is boisterous, and for the most-part, women do not participate in pulling the *rath* because they are likely to be jostled. To pull the chariot, however, is considered auspicious, and many struggle to find a place on the ropes. Women are therefore offered an opportunity to pull the chariot on their own. They do this in celebration of an occasion in which a poor untouchable woman is said to have pulled the chariot by herself to Pore tole where she lived in a rest house. This short procession toward the end of the *jātrā*¹²¹ takes place on a wide street over level ground where the task of pulling the *rath* is relatively easy.

Several hundred people, pulling on as many as six ropes, are usually required to move the *rath*. There is a tension between those who would have the *rath* stay in their neighborhood, and those who wish it to come to theirs. Festivals

¹²¹See Appendix, *Yakha misa jātrā*.

in general, and processions in particular, are also regarded as times and places to settle old scores. Local rivalries are played out in informal competitions between different groups who pull the *rath* and those who lead the pulling. Musical and dance groups also vie to out-perform one another. But some rivalries can develop into physical violence. The general exuberance of the densely packed crowds, fueled by copious consumption of rice beer, can contribute to an over-arching solidarity born of celebration as well as inter-factional conflict.¹²² Stories are told about famous street fighters who often displayed their prowess during *jātrās* when spirits are high and the audience large.

People pulling the *rath* toward their neighborhood are especially impatient with delays caused by unforeseen breakdowns, and on several occasions during the three *jātrās* I witnessed, helmeted police were called in to prevent people from pulling a crippled *rath* and damaging it further. The danger inherent in moving such a massive structure through the narrow ill-paved streets of the interior of Patan, combined with the inevitable jostling involved in the struggle to move the *rath*, lends to a tension of suspense in the air that can erupt into violence if the efforts of those pulling the *rath* are thwarted.

The *rath* pullers' impatience at unforeseen delays is due in part to the timing of feasts and celebrations which coincide with the arrival of the *rath* at its prescribed destination, or *lagan*. The evening the *rath* arrives at its destination,

¹²²On one occasion, a major brawl erupted over an insult which an injured party had suffered at his in-laws' feast. Young men from the neighborhoods of the protagonists became involved in what started as a private conflict. On another occasion, a crowd threw rocks at the windows of a house to which the owner denied them access. They wished to get on the roof of the house to pull on the *jāgala* ropes attached to the *rath*'s spire in order to keep the *rath* upright. The clambering crowds which jump from roof-top to roof-top can cause severe damage to tile roofs, and can undoubtedly wreak havoc as they stream from the street through a house in order to emerge on its roof.

families in the quadrant of town associated with that particular *lagan* celebrate *cwelā bhu*, a feast named for the meat dish which it features. In most cases only immediate family members share this feast, with affines and friends being invited to the more elaborate feast prepared the next day.¹²³ The day the god arrives at a *lagan* (*cwelā bhu*) and the next (*bhujā*) are both referred to by the name of the feast celebrated that day. The name of the second day, however, refers to a feast offered to Bungadya.

Offerings of Cooked Rice: Bhujā

Cwelā bhu and *bhujā* are days of intensive activity around the *rath*. Guthis within a given *cwelā bhu* feast area generally perform their traditional *rath jātrā* observances on the night of their *cwelā bhu* and the next day. These individualized local observances will be discussed in the next chapter; however several features of *bhujā* are public events observed at each *lagan* destination and merit comment here. During the afternoon, processions of *dāpā bhajans* (*jyāpu* groups which play large double headed drums, cymbals, and flutes), come from each neighborhood to the *rath* with large offerings of uncooked rice, potatoes, and other food stuffs. These groups typically make their offerings to Bungadya and Cakwadya, and then circumambulate the *raths* playing music, often accompanying groups of men who dance before them. Many of these neighborhood groups escort the *rath* to the *lagan* associated with their *cwelā bhu*. The most elaborate *bhujā* is celebrated in Lagankhel. Here the musicians and dancers form a long procession which makes its way to Mangal Bazaar in the center of Patan. In 1983,

¹²³It is not unusual for a family to serve fifty or more people on *bhujā kunhu* (the day of *bhujā*).

nearly 800 people participated in 31 *bhajan* groups and thousands lined the streets to observe the procession and compare the skills of the musicians and dancers. This particular *bhujā* procession is also considered an ideal opportunity for young women, who dress up for the occasion, to survey the young men of the area.

The evening of *bhujā*, a feast (*bhu*) of cooked rice (*jā*) is offered to Bungadya and Cakwadya.¹²⁴ Though each *bhujā* differs slightly, they all involve making a series of sculptures of cooked rice and offering them to Bungadya, Cakwadya, and the Bhairab's embodied in the wheels and Bhairab mask of Bungadya's *rath*. This is usually done in the evening in the midst of crowds burning lamps, singing, making other observances and visiting at the *rath*. The people who bring the carefully made and decorated sculptures immediately destroy them upon arriving at the *rath*, for they feed the Bhairabs by mashing the rice on the wheels and mask. Others seize this opportunity to have a rice fight. Thus a scene of remarkable beauty and tranquility, illuminated by the light of hundreds of flickering oil lamps and graced with the music of devotional hymns, is suddenly, albeit briefly, turned into a scene of pandemonium, with wet rice balls flying through the air.

The second-to-last major destination of the festival takes its name from its status in the *jātrā*, and is known as Lagankhel (*lagan* field). In spite of soaring land values in the valley, this area remains open, save for a tree and shrine to Bungadya's mother situated in the middle. It is here that Bungadya pays respect to his mother by circumambulating her thrice, once on the evening of his arrival,

¹²⁴The only exception to this is the *bhujā* at Ga Baha, where a *jyāpu guthī* offers cooked rice to Bhairab in the afternoon as a means of inviting the god to their tole. I suspect, though cannot confirm, that the more elaborate *bhujā* celebrated at Lhu hitti, Lagankhel, and Jawalakhel was also once offered at Ga Baha.

and twice two days later enroute to his Pore tole stopping place a hundred meters away. This annual circumambulation by the *rath* accounts for the open space around the shrine, for it is difficult and requires a lot of room for maneuvering. It is at this point, when Bungadya confronts his mother, that the most extensive sacrifices of the *jātrā* are offered.

Night Sacrifices before the Great Sacrifice

In the evening of the day after the *rath* reaches Lagankhel, four sacrifices are performed at several widely separated locations in the valley. Three secret sacrifices are performed to Diladya at Kotwa dāha, Hayagriba Bhairab at Bungamati, and Phaykwadya located northwest of Swayambhu.¹²⁵ All of these deities are recognized as having the capacity to interfere with the *jātrā* if they are not appeased. The *pānjus* who perform the *pujās* connected with these sacrifices are not permitted to witness the sacrifices themselves, as is the case in the sacrifice previously offered to Diladya during the Koduwa festival.¹²⁶

¹²⁵Residents of Ramkot, a village located several kilometers north of Phaykwadya, identified this god as one to whom *pānjus* offer sacrifices if the *rath* is severely damaged during the *jātrā*. A group of *pānjus* worship at Phaykwadya once annually in addition to the *rath jātrā* observances. The name "Phaykwadya" refers to the wind (*phay*) the god brings during the *jātrā*, threatening the *rath* out of anger at not being invited to a feast (Anjana Sakhya, Ellen Coon, personal communication, 1988). Due to the secrecy which surrounds this sacrifice, I have been unable to identify Phaykwadya positively as the god to which this third sacrifice is offered. Locke notes that this god is the lineage deity of Assan Baha and Mahabaha in Kathmandu and that sacrifice is offered to the god by several different groups. He also gives the curious derivation "hot wine god" for the name, presumably the result of a typographical error (1985:342).

¹²⁶Participants inform me that the *pujā* performed in conjunction with these secret sacrifices is similar to the *bhujā pujā* offered in Ta Baha before the *Niyekhu daśa karma pujā*.

The fourth sacrifice, offered at Maju Sima, the shrine of Bungadya's mother in Lagankhel,¹²⁷ begins with a preparatory ritual in Mulcowk, the central courtyard of the Patan Royal palace. Here the descendant of the Malla King, bearing his emblematic sword, acts as the *jajman* in a ritual which prepares a goat for sacrifice. Once the goat shakes, thereby consenting to being sacrificed, it is led in a small procession with the sword bearer and his usual retinue of umbrella, torch and staff bearers along with two *pānjus*, to *maju sima*. The goat is left there to be sacrificed while the *pānjus* and Malla King perform a *kalaś pujā* in front of Bungadya's *rath*. At the conclusion of this short *kalaś pujā*, the *pānjus* then proceed to have a small feast at *maju sima*. This sacrifice and the ones that follow later that night at Lagankhel all involve the *Yela juju*, in the person of the Malla descendant, as their symbolic sponsor.¹²⁸

The Great Sacrifice (*Mahā bali*)

This sacrifice is ideally performed in the dead of night in order to escape the scrutiny of casual onlookers, especially children. No dire consequences are prophesied for anyone seeing these sacrifices, however, so it appears that this preference for secrecy stems from the likelihood that unknowledgeable people

¹²⁷Also known as *dwaian maju*, possibly in reference to her 1,000 children.

¹²⁸The animals are actually provided by the *Guthī Samsthan*, but the *Yela juju* plays the traditional role of the *jajman* in that he blesses the animal to be sacrificed and offers a token payment to the priests and others involved.

would be offended or might misinterpret what they saw.¹²⁹ It is the bloodiest and most extensive sacrifice of the *jātrā*, lasting over five hours and involving numerous blood offerings.

This series of sacrifices is performed immediately in front of Bungadya's *rath*. The participants include a *Vajrācārya* priest from Patan who is considered an expert in the *mahā bali* performance,¹³⁰ the *pānju* priest, five or six other *pānjus*, the *Yela juju* and his retinue, two *suwa:s*, two butchers, untouchable *Pores*, and the *gākus*. At the center of the sacrificial area a large basket is placed, surrounded with sixty four clay saucers which containing grains, garlic, and ginger as normally offered to deities which accept blood. In addition to these ingredients, one cracked duck egg, often used as a proxy for a sacrificial animal, is placed in each saucer.¹³¹ The *pujā* officiants sit in a line opposite the basket and offerings, facing the *rath*.

The first set of victims includes two goats and a sheep. After these animals have been blessed by the *Yela juju*, and the knife used to cut their throats is blessed by the *pānju* priest, the *suwa:* sacrifices them, slitting their throats so that blood squirts from the victim onto the central assemblage of sacrificial offerings. The first victim is then flayed and dumped into the basket, to later be disposed of

¹²⁹The most strenuous objection I encountered to my photography was in connection with this sacrifice. Those who knew me and my work (including the local police stationed at Maju Sima) calmed the stranger who was objecting. His objection, and the occasional objections of others concerning this particular sacrifice, was based on a concern about what others might think of Nepal if they were to see my photographs.

¹³⁰This priest brings with him a *pujā* manual (*vidhi*) entitled *Sasi Balipuja Saphu* (demon king sacrifice *pujā* book). "Sasi" is a name commonly used in the Newari literature to refer to the demon king of Kamarup.

¹³¹Even when an animal is actually killed, a duck egg is also offered as a kind of insurance that the offering is adequate.

as tainted and dangerous refuse. At this point a bucket of wriggling fish-like creatures¹³² is thrown onto the array of bloodied saucers to die.

The *Yela juju* then blesses two buffalos to be sacrificed. Butchers (*nay*) cut a flap of skin away from the buffalo's neck, exposing two major arteries which they then cut, directing the stream of blood which spurts forth to play on the assemblage of saucers and other offerings. They then decapitate the buffalos and place their heads along with those of the other victims which are lined up in front of the *pujā* paraphernalia in front of the *pānjus*. A burning wick is placed on top of these heads to symbolize the immediate release from the cycle of rebirth which the victims have secured by offering themselves in sacrifice. These sacrifices are offered to appease Bungadya's mother and all the *bhūts* ("ghosts") and *racheses* ("demonesses") who accompany her from Kamarup.

Gākhu brakemen, who honor Bhairab as their tutelary deity, sacrifice two more animals to the Bhairabs embodied in the *rath*.¹³³ The buffalo and sheep they offer are first blessed by the *Yela juju*. Then the eldest *Gākhu* performs a small *pujā* in front of the right front wheel, sprinkling rice beer over one of the clay pots

¹³²These are referred to simply as "*nyā*", or fish, though they appeared to be more like large tadpoles or newt larvae. I know of no other sacrifice which includes these creatures and could solicit no explanation for their presence.

¹³³Locke's brief mention of this sacrifice is inaccurate and woefully inadequate. Contrary to his footnote stating that "Some have explained this sacrifice as a propitiation of the *yakshas*, etc. who came with Avalokitesvar's mother, but this hardly fits with what actually happens..." (1980:270), this explanation is well known and perfectly fits what happens. The sacrifice to the Bhairabs, also inaccurately described by Locke as performed exclusively by butchers on the *Gākhus*' behalf, is clearly offered for the reason proposed by Locke; propitiation of the Bhairabs. The four hours of sacrificial rituals which precede this relatively brief offering to the Bhairabs are not noted by Locke. These offerings which mark the *māha bali* sacrifice as unusually large and are clearly intended for the malevolent beings of Kamarup.

moved from the sacrificial assemblage and another similar offering which he has placed there and has yet to be stained with blood. This brief *pujā* completed, two other *gākhus* sacrifice the sheep, circling the *rath* and sprinkling the four wheels and *dhwamā* Bhairab mask with its blood. The buffalo is then bled as before by a butcher. The *gākhus* drag the bleeding buffalo around the *rath* to anoint the four wheels and *dhwamā* mask with its blood. After circumambulating the *rath* they then decapitate the buffalo and place its head in front of the right front wheel of the *rath*. The *gākhus* then remove the intestines from the buffalo while the sacrificial priests and *Yela juju* circumambulate the scene of the sacrifices. After voiding the intestines, a food favored by Bhairabs, they then inflate them and place one piece on the Hayagriba Bhairab mask on the front of the *rath* and the other on the sacrificial basket.¹³⁴

After the sacrifices are finished, *prasād* distributed, and the *Yela juju* has made ritually prescribed payments to participants in the sacrifice,¹³⁵ untouchable *Pores* gather the remains of the sacrificial animals and other offerings and dispose of them in a *chwāsa* (place for disposal of polluted items) near the Nakhu river. Theoretically, none of the animals killed in this *bali* are fit for human consumption, they being the food of demons. The cost of meat, however, has led some, including the *pānjus*, to "become *bhutas*," in the words of one onlooker, for they

¹³⁴The *Vajrācārya pānjus* who officiate at the *māha bali* also preside over a secret sacrifice to Hayagriba Bhairab in Bungamati that afternoon. Though prohibited from seeing this sacrifice, I was cordially invited to the feast which followed.

¹³⁵Those compensated include the *pānjus*, the sacrifice specialist *Vajrācārya*, and the staff, torch, and umbrella bearers. No one received more than twenty five paisa, equivalent to approximately two 1984 U.S. cents.

too consume some of the sacrificial offerings intended for the denizens of Kamarup.¹³⁶

During the course of these sacrifices, at the moment an animal is killed, the *jhal* and *khal pānjus* block the front door of the *rath* in order to shield Bungadya from the sight of bloodshed. The compassionate Bungadya, though born of a blood-thirsty demoness, abhors sacrifice.¹³⁷

Feast of the Possessed Wives of the Panjus (Naki bhu)

In the evening after the *māha bali*, Bungadya is pulled twice again around the shrine to his mother and then down the road a few hundred feet toward Pore tole. Lagankhel *cwelā bhu* is celebrated after the completion of this short journey, and is followed, as usual, by the *bhujā* the next day. On the morning after the *bhujā*, women move the *rath* a hundred feet or so farther north to the intersection at Pore tole where the *rath* may stay for several weeks or months, depending on the determinations of the *pengu taye jośi* astrologers.

On the appointed day, after the *rath* spire is spruced up with fresh juniper boughs, the *rath* begins the last segment of its journey to Jawalakhel, a trip which is usually accomplished in one day. The *bhujā* is not celebrated until two days

¹³⁶It is possible that the buffalo head which this observer noticed being carried away from the sacrifice by a *pānju* was from the animal offered to Bhairab, and thus technically not of the same polluted and dangerous status as the offerings to Bungadya's mother.

¹³⁷This sight is not spared numerous casual onlookers, however. Though the three *māha balis* that I have witnessed all began in the darkness of early morning, none of them concluded before daylight and crowds of early morning worshippers had arrived. In 1982, the *Nāmasamgītī* (hymns in praise of Bungamati) singers sat behind the sacrificial *pujā* for over an hour waiting for the sacrifices to end so that they could begin their singing which normally starts before sunrise.

after the *rath* reaches Jawalakhel. This final segment of the *jātrā* is the most famous outside the Newar community, and hundreds of families, Newar and non-Newar alike, come to offer *pujās*, burn oil lamps, and perform numerous other devotional activities on the large open field of Jawalakhel.¹³⁸

On the night of the Jawalakhel *bhujā*, the *pānjus*' wives, dressed in brilliant red saris, participate in a well-known ritual in which they go into trance. After their wives have been feasted, the *pānjus* lead them, one by one, to the *rath*, where they fall into a trance which they manifest by shaking their hands which they hold grasped before them. While still shaking, they are led by the *pānjus* to sit in two lines on the ground nearby.¹³⁹ The public makes offerings to the so-called *naki* as they are brought in and out of trance three times by *pānju* priests. They are possessed by the *Aṣṭamātrkāṣ*, or eight mother goddesses. As noted previously, the *Aṣṭamātrkā* are considered to be powerful protectoresses. These are the same goddesses honored in the *pīth puja* performed several months earlier along the route of the twelve year *jātrā*, substantially the same route the god will follow in its return to Bungamati the following afternoon.

While the *Naki* are trancing, the *Gākhus* sacrifice a goat to the wheels of the *rath* and prepare a feast from the meat of the head of the sacrificed goat (*si kā: bhu*) for the *Naki bhu puja* officiants. Children bearing the *bhujā* rice sculptures also arrive during this time, and the inevitable rice fight ensues. The *Naki bhu* is conducted amidst the chaos of the *bhujā* offerings and a large crowd of people

¹³⁸As Locke notes (1980:270, note 34) this area is also named after an aspect of the *rath jātrā*. "*Jā hwala khya*" means "field of scattered rice" in Newari, the "*khe*" suffix being a result of the influence of Nepali (*khe* (Np.) = field).

¹³⁹Though all of the *pānjus*' wives are supposed to come, only ten to fifteen participated in the three *Naki bhu* which I observed in 1982-84.

keeping an all-night vigil by the *rath*. Many of those who spend the night tend large cotton torches or oil lamps, and it is considered auspicious if they can be kept burning till sunrise.

The Display of the Vest (*Bhoto kenegu*)

The climax and best known part of the *jātrā* is, in fact, one of its least interesting aspects. Its fame is due to the fact that the King arrives in person to witness the showing of the *bhoto* and to conspicuously pay his respects to Bungadya and Cakwadya. The *bhoto* is a jeweled vest-like garment. It is not worn by Bungadya, and some suggest that it does not even belong to him, but that Bungadya holds it for safe-keeping. There are numerous stories told to account for the *bhoto*, but most identify its original owner as a *nāga* King. It is widely believed that with the showing of the *bhoto* some rain will fall, no matter how cloudless the sky may be.¹⁴⁰

Much of the afternoon is taken up with securing and cleaning the area for the king's arrival. Combat-ready infantry arrive in truckloads and disperse into the surrounding area. Police, with the assistance of Boy Scouts, secure the perimeter of an area several hundred yards across, permitting most spectators only a distant view of the King and the *bhoto*. In spite of this, thousands of people wait for hours to catch a glimpse of the *bhoto* and His Majesty. When key government officials, including the Prime Minister, are in place on chairs and couches in the reviewing

¹⁴⁰Though I have not heard this connection articulated, the coincidence of the showing of the *nāga rāj*'s *bhoto* with rainfall is striking. There is a tradition that not only *nāgas*, but their possessions as well, have the power to provoke rainfall. A popular story recounts how Jaya Prakash Malla entered the forbidding inner sanctum of Santipur at Swayambhu to retrieve a book written with the blood of *nāgas* in order to alleviate a drought. As soon as he emerged with the book, it is said, it began to rain.

shed, the King and Queen make their entrance and take their places while a military band plays the national anthem. After the attendants of Bungadya, Cakwadya, and the Patan Kumari send *prasād* to the King, the *Guthī Samsthan subba* unfurls the *bhoto* and holds it aloft, circling around on the *rath* deck several times so that the crowd may see. After the *bhoto* is shown, the King and Queen send offerings back to the *rath*, walk up to the *raths* themselves to toss the traditional coin offerings to the gods, and then leave.

The *pānjus* then remove the image from the *rath* and place it in a Palanquin for the journey back to Bungamati. Once again Bungadya is accompanied by his treasure bearers, the *Gurujuya paitan*, the representative of the Patan Malla king who carries the ceremonial sword and wears Bungadya's foot cover on his head,¹⁴¹ and all the others who accompanied Bungadya on his journey to Patan. In addition to these people, many others carrying huge straw torches join the procession as it nears Bungamati. As the procession nears Bungamati, darkness falls, and the light from hundreds of torches and showers of cinders lights the way. When the procession finally reaches Amarapur, it is lit by a huge bonfire onto which the torches are thrown. No further festivities will be held until the god is officially welcomed back to Bungamati three days later at his *bija pujā* (honored welcoming celebration).¹⁴² On this day, thousands of people, primarily Newars, come from all over the valley to honor Bungadya in a grand finale to his *jātrā*.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹This is not, as Locke states (1980:276), a box for Bungadya's silver foot ornaments and it is not, as he also states, a *Guthī Samsthan* official who wears it.

¹⁴²Locke incorrectly places this celebration four days later (1980:277).

¹⁴³Between dawn and noon on *bija pujā* in 1983, approximately 5,000 devotees went up to the deity in his temple, made offerings, and received *prasād*. Many waited nearly an hour in line for this opportunity.

This account has stressed the intricate preparations which precede Bungadya's movements. I have portrayed selected portions of the annual ritual cycle of Bungadya in order to delineate themes which run through the *jātrā* and connect disparate events in meaningful ways. The most pervasive of these themes are the following:

1. The image is simultaneously envisioned as existing in several different contexts and as having several different identities, prompting behaviors involving the god and/or image which are apparently contradictory; it is inert before its bathing, yet treated as a corpse only afterwards; it is reinitiated and the spirit re-installed in Patan, yet "the god" is brought from Koduwa; the god abhors sacrifice, yet is fed the jaw of a sacrificial victim.

2. The image is empowered and protected through human intervention.

3. Human protective intervention frequently entails aligning with potentially threatening gods in order to oppose malevolent divinities.

4. Access to the compassionate entails appeasement of the bloodthirsty. *Pānjus* offer sacrifices to fierce divinities in conjunction with worship of compassionate Bungadya, though they never kill the sacrificial victim.

5. The Malla king is present by proxy whenever the god is moved, and is often present at the sacrifices which are associated with movement. The "King" or his proxy is proud to carry Bungadya's "feet" on his head, the ultimate sign of subjugation.

The *jātrā* depicted thus far constitutes the structure within which thousands of local and individual observances are made to Bungadya. These observances bear the imprint of individual preference and belief more clearly than the prescribed events described above, and will be examined in the chapter to follow.

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CHAPTER VII

PERSONAL, FAMILY, NEIGHBORHOOD, AND GUTHI OBSERVANCES

The essential components of the *rath jātrā* described in the preceding chapter form the structure within which individuals, *guthīs*, and informal associations engage in countless other more discretionary celebrations and devotional activities. Those involved in these observances may be following a centuries-old tradition or establishing the precedent for a tradition in the making. Others perform *pujās* for the first time which they may never perform again. All of these discretionary observances¹ draw on a common repertoire of devotional practices, modified to accommodate individual needs and preferences. This chapter will examine the repertoire of private practices which Bungadya and his *jātrā* inspire.

The Daily Cycle of Events

During the *rath jātrā*, the *rath* is a hub of activity nearly twenty-four hours a day. There is only one brief lull, from around midnight until three or three thirty in the morning, when little happens at the *rath*, unless it is the night of *cwelā bhu* or *bhu jā*, when all-night vigils are often observed. The activity which surrounds the *rath* is comprised of several different kinds of events which are distinguishable in terms of their timing, sponsorship, and content, though none of these characteristics consistently coincides with the other two. Essential parts of the

¹Those who perform these rituals may not regard them as discretionary, but as a vital part of an ancient family or local tradition. These rituals may constitute the fulfillment of a solemn vow which either they have made, or which they are honoring on behalf of an ancestor. These ritual performances have been labelled as "discretionary" because they are not generally regarded as essential to the *rath jātrā*, nor do the principal participants and organizers regard the success of the *jātrā* to be contingent upon them.

festival (as outlined above and in the appendix), daily observances made to the god wherever he may be, daily observances made only while the *jātrā* is in progress or while the god is in Patan, monthly observances made wherever the god is, and annual observances offered during the *rath jātrā*, all contribute to a regular rhythm of activity punctuated with irregularities. The previous chapter having described the framework of the festival within which local and individual forms of veneration take place, the following outline situates these activities within the context of the daily sequence of events which occur at the site of the *rath*. The description which follows includes events which transpire every day while Bungadya is in the *rath*, including those which also take place when Bungadya is in either of his temples.

The timings noted here are approximate and intended to provide a sense of the rhythm within which the events described occur. Daily worship at the *raths* begins in the early morning before dawn. The intensity of activity builds in a steady crescendo to peak at sunrise with the cacophonous din of hundreds of people singing or chatting and more than a dozen percussion and singing groups performing different pieces simultaneously.

3:15 AM: Fifteen to twenty men and women of various castes come to the *rath* from different localities to sing the *Nāmasaṃgītī* every morning that the god is in Patan.² The *Nāmasaṃgītī* are Sanskrit hymns which primarily praise Manjusri, the Bodhisattva linked in Nepalese Buddhist tradition with the draining of the

²This is not done while the image is being painted, as noted above. A group of Bungamati residents take over this role when the god returns to Bungamati.

primordial lake which once filled the Kathmandu valley.³ These hymns are comprised of over 170 *stotras* (hymns), and usually require an hour and a half to sing in their entirety.⁴ These singers are the first to come to the *rath*. They receive offerings on behalf of Bungadya and distribute *tikas* (spots of color put on the forehead) as *prasād*, for no *prasād* is distributed from the *rath* until the morning *nitya puja* has been completed.

4:00 AM: As the *Nāmasaṃgītī* hymns are being sung, twelve *dāpā bhajans* (drum and cymbal instrumental groups, often including flutes) arrive in processions from different parts of Patan, playing their instruments. When they reach the *raths* they circumambulate them, take their traditional places seated on straw mats on the ground nearby, and light oil lamps which they place before them.⁵ These groups are all *vyāpu*, with the exception of one comprised of *Tamrakars*. They come every morning that the god is in Patan and go once to Bungamati four days after he returns there at the end of the *rath jātrā*. These *dāpā bhajans* await the conclusion of the *Nāmasaṃgītī* hymns before beginning to sing their own hymns in praise of Karunamaya, accompanying themselves with drums and small hand

³Namasangiti is identified as form of Manjusri as well as an emanation of Vairocana, the fifth *dhyānī* Buddha. In the latter case, the god is identified with the *Nāmasaṃgītī* texts, as is Prajnaparamita with the text of the same name (Bhattacharyya 1968: 206-7).

⁴These hymns are commonly referred to as the *Nāmasaṃgītī*, though one locally published version gives the full title *Advaya Parāmarthā Sangītī* and another popular edition is entitled *ārya Namasamgiti*. Mitra (1971:170) gives the name *Paramārthanāma Sangītī* to a text collected by Hodgson in the first half of the nineteenth century. The text he reproduces does not resemble the one commonly sung, though the hymn to Manjusri in eight stanzas which he mentions as "annexed to the codex" may be a fragment of the complete text now known as the *Nāmasaṃgītī*.

⁵The number of these groups and the locations they occupied around the *rath* remained constant during the three *jātrās* I witnessed.

cymbals (*tā:*). Also among the earliest to arrive at the *rath* are numerous vendors of *pujā* materials, including flower garlands, clay oil lamps, vermillion, and *papier maché* images of Bungadya and other gods.⁶

4:45 AM: The first *āraṭī puḷā* (*puḷā* involving the illumination of a lamp) of the day is performed. The *āraṭī*, a large candelabra-like ghee lamp, is brought to the *rath* by a member of one of two *guthī*s of *Śākyas* and *Vajrācāryas* who are responsible for the four daily *āraṭī puḷās*.⁷ Like the *Nāmasaṃgītī* singers, they share these responsibilities with residents of Bungamati who take over when the god is in their village.⁸ The first *āraṭī puḷā* of the day is said to be performed in order to "wake up" Bungadya.

4:50 AM: As soon as the *āraṭī* is lit, and its flames rise up to illuminate Bungadya, the *jhal pānju* begins the morning *nitya puḷā* in which the reflection of the image is bathed in a mirror. The *kalas*, mirror, and bell for this *puḷā* are brought to the *rath* each morning by the *mālini*, a daily re-enactment of her ancestor's role in bringing Bungadya to Nepal. When the *āraṭī* is lit, the leader of the *Nāmasaṃgītī* group brings offerings from the *Nāmasaṃgītī* singers up to the *rath* and takes a place on the *dhwamā* next to the *āraṭī guthīyar* who brings the morning *āraṭī*.

⁶Vendors of this sort as well as the ubiquitous Indian toy-sellers are standard features of every major festival in the valley.

⁷The first and third *āraṭī puḷās* are the responsibility of an eight member *guthī* of *Vajrācāryas* and *Śākyas* from Bu Baha, the second and forth are the responsibility of a ten-member *guthī* of *Śākyas* from Nakabahil while Bungadya is in Patan.

⁸These *āraṭī* are passed back and forth between their Bungamati care-takers (one of whom is a *pānju*) and their Patan care-takers. One of the two *āraṭī* features a votive figure which *guthī* members claim to be Siddhinarsimha Malla (reigned 1619-1661), the same King with whom the Patan *tarbar* is identified.

5:00 AM: At this point the morning crowd is at its peak, and typically includes several hundred individuals, though it may number over one thousand on special occasions. Several buses bring worshippers each morning from various points in Kathmandu in time to see the *nitya puja*. At several points during the ritual the crowd throws rice to the god along with the *jhal panju* as he performs the *puja*. At the conclusion of the *puja*, the *jhal pānju* bathes the mirror, passes it in front of the image, looks into the mirror, and then displays the mirror to the crowd. In response to this, the climax of the morning worship, the crowd hurls showers of rice and coins to the god. They then surge forward to be sprinkled with the bathing water (*jhal*), after which they cluster around Cakwadya's *rath* in order to observe the same ritual for Cakwadya. After the *nitya puja* to Cakwadya is completed, the crowd gradually disperses. The *dāpā bhajans* also leave in processions, often paying their respects to *maju sima* on their way if the *rath* is located nearby.

5:15 AM: As soon as the crowds have thinned, the first of seven *tutta bhajans*⁹ (groups who sing hymns (*stotras*, Skrt.)) lights its own oil lamp from the flame of the *āraṭī*, and begins to sing Newari hymns praising Lokeswar and/or Karunamaya. These groups, usually consisting of about ten men, accompany themselves with small hand cymbals (*tā:*) while singing first in front of Bungadya and then in front of Cakwadya. Each successive group lights their oil lamp (*ghya:dewā*) from the lamp of the preceding group and sings for about forty

⁹Until about ten or twelve years ago there were two more *tutta bhajans*. In one case, none of the younger members wished to preserve the tradition after their elders had died. In the other case, too many of the group had to be at their office jobs in the morning.

minutes in front of each *rath*. All but two of these groups are comprised of *Śākyas* and/or *Vajrācāryas*; the other two groups are comprised of *Citrakārs* and *Śreṣṭhās*.

These *tutta bhajan* groups come every day of the *rath jātrā* and go to Bungamati for the welcoming celebration (*bija puṇjā*), which is held there four days after the conclusion of the *jātrā* in Patan. On every day but the *bija puṇjā* in Bungamati, these groups perform in the same sequence. On *bija puṇjā*, however, they reverse the order to check that all of the other *tutta bhajans* have been fulfilling their responsibilities. They are *guthī* organizations and typically have a feast thrice annually, once on *bija puṇjā*, once when Bungadya arrives in Patan, and once again during the *jātrā*.¹⁰

While the *tutta bhajans* are singing, which usually continues until 10:30 or so, individuals and families begin to perform their own observances to Bungadya and Cakwadya as well as to the gods represented by parts of their *raths*. These observances include complex *puṇjās* officiated by *Vajrācārya* priests as well as simple offerings of flaming oil wicks. These will be described in the following section, as they may occur at any time from this point on during the day and evening.

9:30 AM: The second *ārati puṇjā*, known as the *pālan ārati*, is performed around this time. Normally, when the god is in his temple, he is offered a *pālan* of cooked rice every day after this *ārati puṇjā*, but while the god is in the *rath* the *pālan* is not offered to Bungadya but to the Bhairabs embodied in the *rath* wheels and *dhwamā* mask. Only after this *puṇjā* has been finished may the *jhal* and *khal pānjus*

¹⁰Four of these *tutta bhajans* also go to Bungamati each day of *Gunlā*, the sacred month of special observances for Buddhists. This entails leaving Patan at 2:00 AM every day for a month.

take their only meal of the day. Devotees may offer the foodstuffs from which this meal is prepared, and through arrangement with the *pānjus* or the members of the *pānju*'s families who cook for them, such offerings are made nearly every day of the *jātrā*.

No daily rituals are regularly scheduled during the latter part of the morning or early afternoon. Though individuals do offer *pujās* during this time, they occur relatively infrequently, except on Saturdays (when offices are closed) and on special holidays. Though most try to avoid the midday heat, on these days space for performing *pujās* in the rest-houses adjacent to the *rath* can be at a premium and *pujās* are performed throughout the day. People often must wait a long while simply to claim a spot in one of the rest-houses for their ritual performance.

5:00 PM: A large *bhajan* which features a huge *mridanga* (double ended drum played by high castes), a harmonium, and other instruments plays every evening while the god is in Patan. Comprised of men of different castes, it is informally constituted as are many such groups which meet to perform devotional music every evening at temples throughout the valley.

Around nine o'clock and midnight, the two last *āratī pujās* are performed and Bungadya is dressed in his night garment (*cā lan*). These rites do not attract much attention. After the evening meal, people come principally to light various kinds of oil lamps as part of their personal observances. Other *bhajans* from outside Patan also frequently come to play in the presence of Bungadya in the *rath* at this time. These two activities make the site of the *rath* an especially attractive place for people to visit and socialize in the evening.

Individual Observances

As is true of almost anything they do, Newars seldom come alone to pay their respects to Bungadya,¹¹ and they certainly are not alone once they arrive. The simplest and most common observances are undertaken by individuals, though often in the company of friends, and often for the benefit of an entire family. After the commotion of the sunrise *nitya puja* has died down, people continue to come to the *rath* and make small offerings, either tossing rice or coins into the *rath* sanctum, or bringing more elaborate offerings of fruit and other foodstuffs directly to the *rath* and handing them to the *pānju*'s assistants. In either case, some *prasād* is expected in return; at least a leaf smeared with *sindur* taken from the god's feet, or, most lavishly, a flower wreath (*swammā*;) or fruit. During the course of an average day, from after the morning *nitya puja* until nine in the evening, nearly 4,000 individuals are likely to come to the *rath* and make offerings, either because they pass it on their way elsewhere or because they have made a special trip. On a Saturday, half again as many people typically make simple offerings of this kind.¹² On special holidays, such as the first of the month (*sanlū*) or full moon (*punhī*), still more people come to make offerings at the *rath* which are likely to be

¹¹This may be the single most difficult aspect of Newar society for the westerner to understand and live with. The western requirement for personal private space and time is alien to most Nepalese, who seem to feel sorry for anyone who is alone at any time.

¹²These figures are based on two fourteen hour interval surveys undertaken at Pore tole on June 4th and 8th of 1984. A census was taken every forty-five minutes for a period of fifteen minutes. They are intended to provide only rough approximations of the frequency and number of offerings made during the *rath jātrā*.

more elaborate on these occasions. Men and women appear in roughly equal numbers to make simple offerings.¹³

Oil-lamp Illumination: Family and Individual Offerings

The most common form of ritual observance, other than making simple offerings, is lighting various kinds of lamps, usually fueled by oil or *ghī*, in the presence of Bungadya. The most common of these is the single *dewā*, a small pedestal only an inch or so in height, which supports a bit of *ghī* or oil and a cotton wick. These are often lit and held up by onlookers during the morning *nitya puja*. *Dewā* made of clay may be purchased for a few cents from the roadside-vendors, and are commonly lit and left behind at the *rath*, only to be gathered, once expended, by children who sell them back to the vendor to recharge with *ghī*.

These small *ghī* lamps are often lit in sets of 108, an auspicious number equal to the number of incarnations of *Avalokiteśvara*, the number of beads on the *Vajrācārya*'s rosary, and the number of times a which an initiate (*dekha du mha*) must repeat his or her *mantra* in the *āgam* each morning. Inexpensive clay *dewā* may be used, one hundred eight at a time, or as is often done, brass *dewā* are brought from home. This is done for many different gods, but is a particularly popular form of obeisance for *Avalokiteśvara*, possibly because of a popular myth in which he appears in a flame to save a devotee from the ravages of disguised man-eating demonesses.¹⁴

The practice of lighting 108 oil lamps is primarily performed by Newars, though some *Tamangs* and *Chetris* have also adopted the custom. Among the

¹³Men are far more likely to simply offer coins than make food offerings whereas women are far more likely to give foodstuffs than money.

¹⁴See below with respect to the myth of origin of Tham Bahi.

Newar, it is particularly popular among the Buddhist castes and the *jyāpu*, though some *Śreṣṭhā* and other castes also follow this practice. For a majority of those who burn 108 oil lamps during the *jātrā*, it is a yearly practice which they do on behalf of their family for their general welfare or long life.¹⁵ Some light the oil lamps in memory of someone who has died that year, though one Newar informant insisted that this practice was proscribed under such circumstances. During the morning and evening hours, a dozen or so groups are usually in the process of tending one hundred and eight burning *dewā*, and on special occasions thousands of such lamps may be burning in the vicinity of the *raths*. Almost all of those who light a set of *dewā* in front of Bungadya's *rath* repeat the process in front of Cakwadya.

Several variations on this basic idea are also employed, including *gwa:jā matta cyāyeke*, small pyramid-shaped lumps of oil-saturated cotton which are lit 108 at a time, and *sava lakh matta cyāyeke*, in which 150,000 oil saturated cotton wicks are burnt in a flaming pyre. Elaborate brass fixtures are also used in a similar fashion, though these are more often used in conjunction with *guthī* observances.

Mahādip chyākegu: Guthī Torch-burning Observances

Mahādips, or "giant lamps", are large cotton torches which typically stand over five feet high, supported by sticks which are planted in a clay or brass stand. Though individuals do occasionally offer *mahādips* during the *jātrā*, the vast majority are presented as part of a *guthī*'s annual observances in honor of Bungadya. They are always burnt overnight and are attended by *guthīyars* whose turn it is to perform the all-night vigil. *Vajrācārya* priests are often called to bless

¹⁵ I discovered no *guthīs* that performed this rite unless it was associated with a far more complex ritual.

and ceremonially light the *mahādīp* and to offer a brief concluding *pujā* the next morning, though their services are not always deemed essential.

Mahādīps are typically offered by *guthīs* residing in a given *cwelā bhu* (feast) area the evening of their *cwelā bhu*. Others, who offer *mahādīps* in Lhu hiti, light theirs on *bhujā* night as a greeting extended from the next *cwelā bhu* area in which they reside. These individuals, who are members of *sannhūguthīs* (to be discussed below), explain their custom as part of the tradition that the people of Bhaktapur hope to take the god to their city, and their *mahādīp* offerings are an effort to dissuade Bungadya from departing.

There are approximately thirty *guthīs*, whose membership ranges from one to eighteen,¹⁶ which currently offer *mahādīps* during the *jātrā*. All of these groups maintain that their membership was once higher, and that there used to be far more *guthīs* like theirs than now remain. Many still have a small amount of land (one to five *ropanis*), but nearly all complain that their holdings and their yields have diminished, a development which many attribute to land reform. The vast majority of these groups are *jyāpu*, though five are *Vajrācārya* and/or *Śākya*, and the two remaining are *Śreṣṭhā* and *Silpakār/Tamrakār*.

Ghya:dewā Cyāyekegu: Guthī and Individual "ghī-lamp" observances

Ghya:dewā is a term usually applied to large versions of the small *dewā* which are burned 108 at a time, though it is a generic term which can be applied to a wide variety of open oil-lamps. There are approximately fifteen *guthīs* which light these over the course of the *jātrā*, some of which have this one observance and the feast which follows as their sole functions. Those who observe this custom simply sit with their fellow *guthīyars* and others who are also burning

¹⁶Average and modal membership is eight.

ghya:dewā until their *ghya:dewā* burns out or until they have burnt a prescribed amount of oil or ghee. Most groups do this on their *cwelā bhu* night, though one or two go to each *lagan* on the night of the *rath*'s arrival.

One particularly dramatic individual rite which involves burning oil or ghee lamps is the *mha matta cyāyeke* ("human lamp burning") rite. To make this form of offering, one must fast from the night before. Some are particularly fastidious about their state of purity and take great pains to see that no one touches them until they have completed their ordeal. They swath themselves in white cloth, and have clay saucers (*salicā*) placed on piles of cow dung at various prescribed points on their bodies. These saucers are then filled with oil and fitted with cotton wicks and lit, transforming the donor's body into a kind of human *āraṭī*. Men usually lie on the ground and have sixteen lamps placed on their bodies, whereas women usually sit on a stool and have nine lamps balanced on their head, shoulders, knees, hands, and feet (though see Toffin 1984:574-75). This ordeal may last a number of hours, depending on how much oil is burnt. This is usually done by a few people in front of the *rath* each year, and is also performed in front of other deities. I have noted these rites performed by *jyāpus*, *dhobis* (washermen), and one *Śākya* woman. They are usually performed as part of a vow which stipulates how much oil is to be burnt and, in some cases, to which other gods and/or how

often it is to be performed. Some perform the *mha matta cyāyeke* ordeal in order to cure their ill health.¹⁷

Sannhūguthīs

Roughly half of those *guthīs* who light *ghya:dewā* during the *jātrā* are *sannhūguthīs*. Members of these *guthīs* come to Bungadya wherever he is, to make offerings on the first day of each month of the solar calendar (*sannhū* or *saniū*). Some of these *guthīs* also light *ghya:dewās* on the night of their *cweīā bhu*, and most come to Bungamati for the *bija pujā* at the end of the *jātrā*. These *sannhūguthīs* are probably the most extensive single form of *guthī* devoted to a particular god in the valley.¹⁸ The monthly offerings to Bungadya and the feasts which follow are still, in many cases, supported to some degree by *guthī* land holdings, though most complain of diminishing holdings and diminishing returns from the holdings they retain.

The prevalence of this form of *guthī* in the valley makes it difficult to determine how many such *guthīs* remain and how many there once were. It is not unusual for neighborhoods (*twā:*) in Patan to have eight or more such *guthīs*, and

¹⁷ Another ordeal, commonly known as *he lambu* after the cry uttered to clear the way, involved the kind of self-inflicted punishment common at Holi in India. Long needles were used to impale the devotee's cheeks and tongue, and sometimes these were used to support burning lamps or torches. Though this is still reported to occur elsewhere in the valley, it is apparently no longer done in the presence of Bungadya. Extensive and punishing prostrations are performed occasionally in honor of Bungadya. In 1983 a *jyāpu* rolled all the way from his village, over five miles away, to Bungamati on the occasion of *bija pujā*.

¹⁸ A story published by Asa Kaji Vajracarya (N.S. 1092, A.D. ~1972) attributes the origin of the *sannhu guthī* to a poor *Śrestha* who lived in Patan and desired to honor Karunamaya with his Buddhist neighbors, but found himself unable to participate because of the heavy financial responsibilities they placed on *guthī* members for luxurious feasts. He states that the *sannhu guthī* was established in N.S. 789 (A.D. 1669).

there are thirty or more neighborhoods which could easily support this number in Patan. Small villages all over the valley often have several viable *sannhūguthīs*; Panga, which has a population under 1,000, currently has about ten, I have noted five from Kirtipur which undoubtedly has more, Theco has ten or twelve, tiny Machegaon boasts at least two, and Lubhu has four. Bulu, with a population of 583, has three *sannhūguthī* groups which have formed relatively recently (Pradhan 1981:30).¹⁹ I have noted over seventy *sannhūguthīs* without having attempted an exhaustive survey. It is certainly safe to estimate that there are several hundreds of these *guthīs* in the valley including of thousands of members, for most *guthīs* for which I have membership data are comprised of ten or more *guthiyars*, and it is not unusual for there to be twenty or more members in a single *guthī*. The majority of these *sannhūguthīs* are *jyāpu*, though some are *Śākya* and some *Śreṣṭhā*.

On the first day of each month, *sannhūguthī* members arrive at the *rath* (or temple, if the *jātrā* is over) in procession, often with the other *sannhūguthīs* of their village or neighborhood to present their offerings. Most *sannhūguthīs* present a *kikimpā*, a feather-like metal (usually silver) crown ornament, to Bungadya along with elaborate offerings of foodstuffs. The *kikimpā* is returned to them with *prasād* after the god's attendants touch it to the head of the image. After this presentation, most *sannhūguthīs* have a feast near the god every month, though some limit their feasting to once every other month for financial reasons.

Many of these *guthīs* have adopted the institution of *lhapaṃ bhwe*, or financing their feasts, at least partially, by collecting contributions from their

¹⁹The oldest inscription we were able to find on the *pujā jhwalam* brought by the *sannhu guthī guthiyars* was from A.D. 1672. We also noted two such inscriptions from the eighteenth century.

members.²⁰ Some have no land holdings at all, others have holdings as small as one-half *ropani* (.065 acres), and a very few have sufficient land to support their monthly offerings and feasts. In most cases, whatever expenses are entailed in providing the feast and offerings which are above and beyond the funds available from land income and/or contributions must be met by the *guthyar*(s) whose turn it is to sponsor the month's festivities.

Shrinking *guthī* membership, commonly reported by *sannhūguthī* members, places a great burden on those who remain *guthyars*, especially if they maintain the tradition of feasting every month. Though the overwhelming tendency is for *guthī* membership to decline, and the number of *guthīs* is clearly on the wane, the recent formation of *sannhūguthīs* in Bulu and the vitality of a sixteen-member *sannhūguthī* from Bhaktapur which was formed without land only 28 years ago suggest that the *sannhūguthī*, through adopting the contribution system and making other modifications, is likely to survive for some time to come. It is perhaps the best example of one social institution with a very specific purpose which cross-cuts nearly all other divisions within Newar society, including neighborhood, village, caste, religion, and gender.

Patāha biyegu: Ceremonial Banner Offering

The overlap between *ghya:dewā guthīs* and *sannhūguthīs* has already been noted; *sannhūguthīs* from a given locality along the *rath jātrā* route frequently join with their neighbors in performing local observances celebrated during their *cwelā bhu* or *bhuja* feast days. Another example of this kind of overlap is the offering of

²⁰Among the few *sannhu guthīs* for which I have specific financial information, this contribution ranged from one to fifteen rupees per person (in 1984, U.S. 7 cents to \$1.05).

long cloth (or rarely, metal) banners to Bungadya and Cakwadya during the *jātrā*.²¹ Many of the *dāpā bhajan* musical groups which come on *bhujā* day to the chariots include a *patāha* among their offerings, and some of these groups are also *sannhūguthīs*.

Patāhas are also offered to gods in their temples.²² Wright's chronicle recounts an occasion when King Pratapa Malla had a *patāha* draped from Pasupatinath to his palace, a distance of several miles (Wright 1972:216-17).²³ Whether offered to a god in its temple or to Bungadya, Cakwadya, or Janmadya in their *raths*, the *patāha* is a medium for making more direct contact with a divinity.

Patāha offerings to Bungadya typically include not only the *patāha*, but sweet-filled breads (*catāmari* and *yomari*), and often a coconut as well. Though a priest is sometimes called to bless the *patāha*, this rarely occurs. The individual most vital to making such an offering is one of the *Yangwal* vine lashers who helped build the *rath*, for only they may climb its spire to attach the banner to the top of the *rath*. In exchange for a few of the sweet-meats and a few rupees, the *Yangwal*, typically the *nāyā*: (foreman), climbs to the top of the *rath* and tosses the *patāha*, which is rolled up around the food offerings, down to the donors who are

²¹Both *raths* also bear long metal banners, one of silver and another of gilt brass. These are offered annually by the descendants of the donors after they are blessed in brief rituals, one of which is presided over by a Brahmin, and the other performed by a *Vajrācārya*.

²²The metal equivalents of *patāhas* which are offered for temples, called *halampos*, are permanently mounted, descending from the top of the temple to dangle over the doorway.

²³In September of 1984 I witnessed a *patāha puja* performed at Jana Baha which involved draping a length of cloth, at least 300 feet long, from the top of the temple, outside the *baha*, around the nearby temple of Kel tol Ajima (a deity to which sacrifice is offered) and back inside where it was held by the many participants which offered it.

waiting to catch it below.²⁴ Though they have only moments before handed these offerings to the *Yangwal*, the donors vie with one another to catch the *patāha*; the sweet-meats within having been converted to a special kind of *prasād* by their descent from the top of the *rath*. The *Yangwal* then tosses down the coconut, which the donors also compete with one another to catch, for some say that whoever catches it will be blessed with a son.²⁵

During the course of the *rath jātrā*, several dozen *patāhas* are usually draped from the *rath*'s spire, accumulating as the *jātrā* proceeds.²⁶ Most of these are donated by *gyāpus*, with the next most prevalent donor group being *Śākyas*. Most are donated by families, and I noted no *guthī* which had *patāha* donation as their sole purpose. The style of these *patāhas* varies considerably; though most are relatively plain, a few include their donors' names spelled out on them, and some are inscribed with the "Om mani padme hum" mantra of *Avalokiteśvara*. Nearly half of the *patāhas* donated are hand woven by female members of the family, and it is common for the woman or women who weave them to fast while doing so. Though the time reported as required for doing this varies widely (from a few days to two months), many *patāha* makers stress the self-sacrifice required to produce the one hundred feet of cloth needed.

²⁴Both the custom of offering *patāhas* and throwing *maris* from the top of the *rath* are clearly illustrated in a 1712 painting published by Vergati (1985), and the *patāhas* are illustrated in a painting nearly a century older published in the same article.

²⁵This feature is much more explicitly emphasized in the several *naimkhyā khwerkegu* (coconut droppings) held over the course of the *jātrā*. On these occasions, only males compete for the coconut, and the physical struggle for the prize occasionally inspires police intervention.

²⁶In 1984, 34 *patāhas* were donated during the *jātrā*.

Satwa: puḷā

The most commonly offered form of the *kalaś puḷā*, often combined with a *hwama puḷā* and other elaborations, is the so-called *satwa: puḷā*. There is some confusion in the literature regarding the meaning of this term and its derivation.²⁷ Most *Vajrācāryas* who officiated at the *satwa: puḷās* offered over the course of the *jātrās* I observed gave the full name *sapta vidhān puḷā* if questioned about the specifics of the *puḷā* they were performing. Ratna Kaji Vajracarya, in his manual, "Materials Required for the Rituals of the Buddhists of Kathmandu",²⁸ gives the full name as *Sapta vidhānuttara puḷā* (sic), and notes that the shortened popular name is *satwa: puḷā*. The full name can be roughly translated as "the *puḷā* of the supreme seven-fold manner of devotion," essentially the definition provided by Satya Mohan Joshi (1987:599) for *satwa: puḷā*. These manners of devotion, according to Vajracarya, include worship, *puḷā*, removal of sin, giving pleasure, seeking instruction, aspiring to the *bodhicitta* (perfected mind), and abundance. The esoteric nature of these "seven manners" probably eludes most of those participating in these *puḷās*, if not those performing them as well. The temptation to provide derivations of the name from the more obvious features of the *puḷā* has certainly led to the confusion of ethnographers concerning this ritual.

Two series of 108 offerings are made in the course of this *puḷā*. One series is comprised of the five *pāncopachāra* offerings of flowers, incense, light, scent,

²⁷Lewis (1984:220) suggests that the "*sata puja*" has Tibetan origins, and interprets it to mean "...puja of the seven." Locke gives the gloss "...*puja* of the one hundred offerings" (1982:102) though in fact 108 offerings are made of each substance presented.

²⁸*Yem Deyā Bauddha jā Kriyā yā Halamjvalam*. 1980.

and food.²⁹ These offerings are manifested in the form of 108 repetitions of *mudras* and *mantras* performed by the *Vajrācārya* priest whose services are required for this *pujā*. These symbolic offerings are accompanied with 108 offerings of rice, water, lighted oil or ghee lamps, *gwa:jā* (forms made of flour, called *torma* in Tibetan), and incense which are usually lined up in front of the *kalaś* and/or *hwama* *pujā* implements.³⁰ In addition to these offerings, those who perform these *satwa: pujās* often add other prestations of their own inspiration, including *kikimpās*, clothing for the god, and *patāhas*, all of which have been noted as offerings presented in other contexts.

The only *guthīs* which perform *satwa: pujās* do so in conjunction with other observations and/or have major responsibilities with respect to the functioning of the *rath jātrā*. Almost all of those who offer *satwa: pujās* are families, the only exception that I have noted (in addition to the above *guthīs*) being large groups of friends who typically label themselves *dharma pāsā*, or *dharma* friends.³¹ In both cases, the *satwa: pujā* often serves to mark the end of a long period of daily observances to Bungadya, such as coming to *nitya pujā* every morning.

The *satwa: pujā* seems to be the exclusive domain of the Newar in so far as it is performed over the course of the *rath jātrā*. It is most popular among the *Śākyas* and *Tuladhars*. Though *Vajrācāryas* are involved in nearly all *satwa: pujās*

²⁹*Puṣpa, dhupa, dīpa, gandha, naivedya* (Skt.) Vermillion is frequently substituted for the scent *gandha*).

³⁰This basic form may also be expanded to 360 offerings or 1,000 offerings (*sahasra pujā*), in the latter case usually requiring three priest to perform the required *mudra* repetitions.

³¹"*Dharma*" has several meanings, including "law," "prescribed practice," "virtue," and "good works." One of the most common reasons cited for performing a *pujā* is "*Dharma yāyeta*," literally, "to do *dharma*," meaning to perform a good work, usually in conformity to conventional practice.

as priests, they sponsored only a few of those that I encountered. Relatively few *iyāpus* sponsored *satwa: puḷās* during the *jātrā*, except in so far as they were among the *dharma pāsā* groups which were also principally composed of *Tuladhars*, *Śākyas*, and some *Vajrācāryas*.

The most commonly cited reasons for offering the *satwa: puḷā* pertain to protection and welfare, sometimes intended for the sponsor's household, but often explicitly offered on behalf of the "whole world." Some perform the *satwa: puḷā* in fulfillment of a vow, others in the name of a deceased family member, acknowledging *Avalokiteśvara*'s influence in the after-world. Other reasons include removing one's sins and honoring a family member: in one case a woman was thus honored on her birthday. A majority of the thirty-five *satwa: puḷās* I noted during the 1984 *jātrā* were annually performed observances, and their sponsors' explanations of the ritual they were performing often centered on the fact that it was an annual tradition. Other explanations concerning the nature of the ritual included the fact that many considered this *puḷā* to be devoted to Tara, or more specifically, Arya Tara, whom they identified as Bungadya's consort, or "*śakti*," and a powerful protectress.

The degree of elaboration and expense entailed in these *puḷās* varies widely. Some incorporate expensive donations, such as jewelry, and some involve considerable expense and difficulty because of the exotic requirements for *hwama* offerings, or because of long and elaborate *puḷā* performances which require several priests to perform. The size of the feast to be prepared is also a major factor and can vary considerably. Some of the *dharma pāsā* groups sponsored major *puḷās* costing 2,000 rupees or more, and several also sponsored *lapham*

bhwe, or feasts which were open to paying ticket holders and members of the *dharma pāsā* group.³²

Though feasts generally follow the celebration of a *satwa: puṣā*, many acknowledge that, ideally, another *puṣā* should be performed prior to feasting. This *puṣā*, often referred to as *laysiwā puṣā*, or *śanti puṣā*, consists of making an offering of meat and alcohol to a deity which accepts sacrifice.³³ The deity of preference for this *puṣā* during the *rath jātrā* is, of course, *maju sima*, though the nearby Batuka Bhairab is also so honored. Though this custom is known and viewed as the preferred way of ending the *satwa: puṣā*, it is honored at least as much in the breach as in its observance.³⁴ Most of those who sponsor and perform the *satwa: puṣā* fast from the preceding evening until its conclusion. Those who perform the *laysiwā puṣā* do so in order that they may safely resume consuming meat and alcohol.

The principal which underlies the *laysiwā puṣā* is, by now, familiar. Summoning the benevolent Bungadya, Bodhisattva par excellence, entails the appeasement of bloodthirsty divinities. The *satwa: puṣā* is the most common *puṣā*

³²The *nāmasaṃgītī* group organized several such feasts during the time I was in Nepal, one of which fed over 1,200 people. A *dharma pāsā* group from Kathmandu sold over 450 tickets to one of their feasts at 15 rupees per person, an extravagance many could not afford.

³³Ratna Kaji Vajracarya (1980:2) states that the members of the *Jana baha saṃgha* perform their *laysiwā puṣās* offered in conjunction with *satwa: puṣās* for Janmadya at Santipur. One informant stated that after performing the *satwa: puṣā* they had to offer a "*Śantipur puṣā*" at *maju sima*.

³⁴Of the thirty *sapta vidhān puṣās* performed for Bungadya in the 1984 *jātrā* for which I was able to obtain detailed information, five sponsors stated that they intended to make offerings to *maju sima* or Bhairab before they had their feast. Others admitted that they would not bother to make these offerings, but acknowledged that they were lax in this regard.

performed during the *jātrā* in which Bungadya is invoked through *sādhana*. Even in this common observance performed for lay devotees, the worshipper should ideally honor not only Bungadya, but also mollify gods which demand blood sacrifice.

The observances outlined in this chapter comprise only the most typical of those performed during the *jātrā*. These examples serve to illustrate the various ways in which personal, family, and *guthī* ritual activities during the *jātrā* are organized and sponsored. They also illustrate several features of Newar culture which pervade Newar social life and Newar beliefs about their gods. Just as the organizing principles of the *guthī* accommodate the needs of remarkably diverse institutions, so does a relatively small repertoire of rites serve a wide range of beliefs and needs. Among the beliefs which lie at the heart of many of the observances described in this chapter, the two most consistent are that Bungadya is a provider of material well-being and protection, and for those who seek the intimacy and power entailed in summoning his presence, the threat of potentially malevolent deities requires that they be appeased.

CHAPTER VIII

"GOD'S WORK": THE DIVISION OF LABOR AND THE LOGIC OF OBLIGATION

This is the last of three chapters which describe the *rath jātrā* and the numerous ways in which it constitutes a part of many different people's lives. The last two chapters have described the chain of annual events which all focus on the chariot procession of Bungadya, but of which the procession is only one part. Chapter six situated the *jātrā* within the context of the numerous ritual preparations which must precede it and the related rites which surround and protect the procession while it is in progress. Chapter six also described, as part of this larger continuum of events, the more widely known series of annual observances which comprise the chariot procession itself. Chapter seven viewed the *jātrā* from another perspective, that of the individuals who come to offer their own observances, whether in groups or singly, in honor of Bungadya. These observances were first described in the context of the daily cycle of events which transpire during a typical day of the *rath jātrā*, and then examined as options within a repertoire of rituals performed in the presence of Bungadya and elsewhere. The present chapter explores the work of a few of the hundreds of people who are directly involved in the workings of the *jātrā*. As in the preceding chapter, two different perspectives will be employed here; the first focusses on the work to be done, the second on those who do it.

The first section of this chapter will examine three annual *jātrā* events with respect to how the work they involve is allocated. Those who are involved in these major events also participate in annual cycles of observances which intersect with the better-known events of the *rath jātrā*, but which include other activities as well.

The second part of this chapter will examine four key roles in the *jātrā* in terms of the responsibilities and benefits they entail. It will also consider how those who perform these central roles explain the nature of their involvement in the *jātrā*.

The *pānjus* are familiar with most, if not all, of the ritual observances described in chapters six and seven. The Newar laity of the valley are also generally familiar with most of these observances, excluding some of the rites in which only *pānjus* and a few others participate. The details considered in this chapter, by contrast, are known to relatively few, and many are not known even to the *pānjus*.

The Division of Labor: Three Examples

The responsibilities entailed in preparing for and carrying out the numerous events which constitute the *rath jātrā* are divided among hundreds of people. Much of the work of the *jātrā* is performed by *guthīs* drawn from particular clans or castes. Some responsibilities are borne by particular families or single individuals who have inherited roles in the workings of the *jātrā*. Other responsibilities are carried out by neighborhood organizations, relegated to contractors, or assumed by the *Guthī Samsthān* office personnel. Observances which are repeated over the course of the *jātrā* at various places in slightly different forms are the products of differing schemes for allocating the responsibilities they entail in each locality.

Though there is great diversity in the kinds of work involved in the *jātrā* as well as in the schemes for getting it accomplished, there are a few common organizing principles according to which the work is allocated. The three summaries which follow illustrate these principles as well as the extensiveness of

the network of *jātrā* roles and responsibilities which any one event can entail. Many individuals who are not mentioned either in the descriptions given in chapter six nor in the appendix have traditional responsibilities which are vital to the parts of the *jātrā* outlined below.

The first two examples, the *daśa karma puḷā* and the *bhuḷā* rice sculpture offerings, have been discussed in chapter six and will only be presented briefly here. They serve to illustrate how even small-scale events can involve numerous people of diverse backgrounds. The third example, the building of the *rath*, will be treated in greater detail, for this subject has yet to be discussed. The structure of the *rath* also merits attention here because it plays a major role in the nature of the procession and the beliefs which surround the *jātrā*, a role which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Daśa karma puḷā

This intricate *puḷā* and the protective *kalaś puḷā* and *bhuḷā puḷā* which precede it involve at least twenty-two people who play twelve distinct roles.

Potters (*Kumha*): A *guthī* of five potters from U Baha make the clay pots and other paraphernalia used in the *daśa karma puḷā* and the protective *kalaś puḷā* which precedes it. Several months before the *daśa karma puḷā*, these potters participate in a *puḷā*, presided over by the principal *pujari*, to bless the clay with which these pots are to be made.

Painters (*Citrakār, pūṃ*¹): Two different families share the tasks of painting the seventy-odd pots used in the protective *kalaś puḷā* and decorating the pots

¹*Citrakār* is commonly used both as a surname and as a term of reference for the *jāt* of painters known as *pūṃ* in Newari.

required in the *daśa karma*. These painters must also decorate the silver pots which hold the "life" of Bungadya and his invoked protectors.

Image Painters (*Niyekhus*): Only the members of two high-caste *Śreṣṭhā* families, originally from Bhaktapur, may paint the image of Bungadya. Two *Niyekhus* are key participants in the first of the two *daśa karmas*. In order to perform their role as image painters they must take initiation from the *pānjus*. In order to repaint the two "Tara" consorts of Bungadya, they must be initiated by the *Śreṣṭhācārya* priest of the Taleju temple in Bhaktapur.²

***Pānjus*:** Four different *pānjus* are involved in this rite. The *Vajrācārya* principal *pujari pānju* is the officiant in the protective *pujās* which precede the *daśa karma puja*, the two *daśa karma pujās*, and the *hwama pujās* which follow. The *jhal* and *khal pānjus* are the key participants in the second *daśa karma*. The temple attendant (*dyā: pālā*) *pānju* is present during these rites and assists in moving the image.³

***Jātrā jajman*:** The male head of one of two *Śreṣṭhā* lineages in Patan acts as the *jajman* during these *pujās*.

Kwope juju ("King of Bhaktapur"): Until recently, the role of opening the eyes of the image with the ceremonial sword was played by a "descendant of Narendradeva," but is now carried out by one of the attendants to the Taleju temple in Bhaktapur.

²Recall that the *Śreṣṭhācārya* is a Hindu tantric priest and performs rituals which would cause a Brahmin to lose caste. The Taleju of Bhaktapur would have been the tutelary divinity of Narendradeva if, indeed, as popular belief has it, Narendradeva ruled from Bhaktapur.

³The *pānju*'s roles are described in some detail in chapter six.

Suwa: (Bungamati): One of the male members of eight *suwa:* (*jyāpu* cook) lineages in Bungamati assists in the *daśa karma puja*.

Suwa: (Patan): A *guthī* comprised of *suwa:*s from Patan cook the rice which is offered to Bungadya during his first rice feeding and prepare the partially cooked rice which is offered in the *! bhū* (*!hi puja* feast) given to many of those who work in the *jātrā*.

Kartas (assistants): Two *jyāpus* perform a secret *puja* during the course of the fire sacrifice offered at the conclusion of the *Niyekhu's daśa karma puja*.

This list could be extended to include many others, such as those involved in the *khicā bhu* ("feast for dogs") sacrifice which provides the jaw offered to Bungadya during the *pānju's daśa karma*, the *Pore* who take away the rice offerings from the protective *bhujā puja* performed immediately before the *Niyekhu's daśa karma*, the assistants who escort the "King of Bhaktapur" to Patan, and so forth. The *daśa karma puja* is typical of "events" which I have provisionally described as discrete phenomena, for it is difficult to draw boundaries around any given "event" in the *rath jātrā* with respect to the people who are involved.

Bhujā Rice Sculpture Preparation and Presentation: Pore tol

The rice sculpture offering presented in Pore tol, one of three such offerings made during the *jātrā*, involves twenty-nine people in ten different ritually prescribed roles. The schemes of task allocation, the participants involved, and the ways the rice sculptures are made differ among the three *bhujā* offerings which are made during the *jātrā*. The *Bhujā* offering presented in Pore tol,⁴ described below, is as

⁴The sculptures to be presented in Pore tol are actually prepared in Mulcowk, a courtyard of the Patan Malla palace.

elaborate as that offered in Jawalakhel, and far more elaborate than the *bhujā* offering made in Lhu hiti.⁵ The participants who make the Jawalakhel offerings differ in several respects from those involved with the Pore tol and Lhu hiti offerings, the most noteworthy being the dominant role played by high caste Hindu *Śreṣṭhās* who subsidize the Jawalakhel offerings and the feast which follows.⁶

Water carriers (*Tandukar, Khusa*): One family of *tandukars*, a *jāt* traditionally associated with weaving (*tan* = "handloom") has the responsibility of bringing the water required for cooking the rice. The women in this family seem to share (if not assume) this responsibility just as they would at home.

Rice cookers (*Suwa*): Eight *guthīyars* of this sub-caste of *jyāpus*, traditionally associated with preparing feasts, are charged with cooking the rice and other food-stuffs used for the sculptures.

⁵*Vajrācāryas* used to come to Nag Baha, where the Lhu Hiti *bhujā* sculptures are made, to sculpt and decorate the offerings.

⁶These *Śreṣṭhās* are *Malekus*, and trace their origins to Banepa. They derive their name from "*Malla lāyekū*," meaning "from the Malla palace." One informant stated that they came to live in Patan 1,400 years ago. At that time, Karunamaya gave them Pulchowk to live in because it was so difficult for them to come all the way from Banepa (app. 40 km. away) to worship him. There are now twenty households in the *Maleku guthī* which provides some of the rice for the sculptures. There used to be land which financed their *guthī* expenses, but now there is none. *Guthī* members contribute half of the rice required (1 *muri* = 2.4 bushels), and the *Guthī Samsthan* supplies the rest. The *guthīyar* whose turn it is to function as *pālā* incurs expenses of 2,000 - 3,000 Rs. (U.S.\$125-\$185) during his turn, for he must hire the band which accompanies the *bhujā* sculptures to Jawalakhel, provide a feast to all of the *Malekus*, and offer two sacrifices at their *digu dyā*: (Thakta devi) over the course of the year. One *Maleku* woman succinctly summarized their ambiguous religious orientation by stating "Our *thār* (name, kind) is Hindu, but our *Dharma* is Buddhist." ("*Jimiya thār Sivamargi, tara jimiya dharma bauddhamargi.*") They call *vajrācāryas* for *pujā* performances, but call Brahmins to perform *śraddha* (annual memorial service for the ancestors).

Sculptors (Śākyas): Five Śākyas sculpt and decorate the numerous components of the two sculptures. The Śākyas traditionally cast metal images of deities.

Palanquin carriers: The two sculptures are carried to the *raths* by six *vyāpus* (*Dongols*) from Hauga, near Darbar Square.

Horn players (*Indra bhajan*): Two *vyāpu* instrumentalists play long metal horns (*kāhā*) while escorting the sculptures to the *rath*.

Yela Juju (Patan Malla King): Either the descendant of the king or his hired *vyāpu* representative carries the sword of "Siddhinarsimha" in the procession of the sculptures. He is accompanied by the usual staff and torch bearers (*māhām*).

Kusle bhajan: Three *Kusle* (*jogi*) instrumentalists who normally accompany the ceremonial sword of the Malla kings play the double reeded *mwā:li*, the small *dholak* drum, and the small *khwalimali* cymbals.

Umbrella bearer: One of two *vyāpus* traditionally bears the umbrella marking the status of the king's ceremonial sword.

Patan Kumari: The Kumari comes to witness the *bhujā* offerings and the coconut dropping which follows.

The ingredients and equipment for making the rice sculptures presented at Pore tol are provided entirely by the *guthi* Samsthan. The division of labor required to make and offer the sculptures is generally consistent with the traditional occupations of those involved, though not in every case.⁷ Those who participate in this offering are all from the Pore tol *bhujā* section of Patan. Both of these

⁷The *Tandukār* are no more intimately associated with hauling water than any other *jāt*, however, Toffin (1988:8) notes that they are also specialists in rice preparation and stucco work.

sculptures, which require several hours to make,⁸ are destroyed within moments of reaching Pore tol, for they are broken up when offered to the gods embodied in the wheels and *dhwamās* of the *raths*.

Building the Rath

A full description of the *rath*-building process and the beliefs which concern the *rath*'s structure would easily fill a long chapter. Nearly every piece of wood that goes into the *rath* has a distinctive name, and many of these names allude to stories pertaining to the *rath* part they describe. Just as the wheels are identified with Bhairabs, so are other parts identified with other deities. The timbers used for some of the key parts of the *rath* must be felled in ritually prescribed ways, and the mythology and beliefs which relate to this process are rich in detail and complexity. More than sixty people from nine distinct groups play vital roles in the erection of the *rath* each year, many of them contributing specialized skills required to raise the complex *rath* structure.⁹ The form of the *rath* and manner in which it is built are subjects of concern not only to those who build it, but to the general public as

⁸These intricate sculptures are decorated with vermillion and many different foods, including meat, eggs, beans, and vegetables. Included on the temple-shaped sculpture offered at the *rath* of Bungadya are rice images of a Garuda (the winged vehicle of Vishnu) and a *Narabhu*. I could solicit no explanation with regard to what a "*Narabhu*" is. In retrospect, considering its unadorned human shape, the name may mean "human feast" (*nara* = human, *bhu* = feast). I know of no precedent in myth or rumor for human sacrifice to Bhairav, so the meaning of this term remains uncertain. The *cībā*-shaped sculpture offered to Cakwadya is adorned with lions (*simgha*) and *daityas* (demons, monsters) of rice.

⁹I have documented 165 different wooden parts of the *rath* structure. This figure does not include the parts made of cane or metal, nor the four wooden wheels, each of which is comprised of 25 wooden pieces.

well. This concern is reflected in popular stories about *jātrās* of the past and day-to-day conversation about the progress of the *rath* while the *jātrā* is in progress.¹⁰

The process of building the *rath* for the annual *jātrā* is generally considered to begin the day Bungadya is bathed and it ends just before the god is placed inside. On the afternoon of the bathing ceremony some of the vines used to lash together the *rath*, along with other token parts of the *rath* and *pujā* equipment required during the *jātrā*, are paraded through Patan in a long procession known as *Nhawan yā*: ("bathing procession"). The evening after the bathing, the leader of the vine-lashers and the leader of the carpenters who build the *rath* perform a *pujā* to the four support pillars upon which the *rath* chassis will be built.¹¹

Though these ritual observances do mark the beginning of the *rath* construction in Pulchowk, other tasks must be completed before the building process begins. For most *jātrās* the same wooden *rath* parts are reassembled, though some new parts are usually required every year. The wheels, for example, are the most vulnerable major parts of the *rath*, and completely new ones are built every five years or so. Every twelfth year the *rath* is built completely anew.

The following descriptions of the roles played by those who participate in building the *rath* are necessarily brief, but in sum, provide an overview of the construction process and reveal another intricate web of interlocking obligations to Bungadya.

¹⁰The symbolic import and practical implications of the *rath*'s unusual form will be discussed in the following chapter.

¹¹These four posts, kept in a *baha* in Pulchowk, are called *hanumakim*, a contracted form of *hanumanta kilā*, or "Hanuman posts." Hanuman, the rescuer of Rama in his battle with Lanka, is famous for his strength.

Lumber providers: This responsibility was evidently once borne by the residents of different neighborhoods in Patan and by the people of Bungamati. Each area is reported to have been obligated to provide the lumber needed for a specific part of the *rath*. This is no longer the case, and the lumber is either provided by *bwasi* (see below), the *Bārāhī*, or the *Guthī Samsthan*.

***Dhwamā* providers:** Previously, a clan¹² consisting of twelve families known as *bwasi* ("wood-cutters") bore the responsibility of cutting all the timber required for the *rath* except for the wheels.¹³ Now there appear to be exceptions to this rule. However, providing the *dhwamā*, the largest single piece of wood in the *rath*, is still the exclusive provenance of the *bwasi*. These wood-cutters all live in a small village between Bungamati and Koduwa called Kwenca.¹⁴ The *bwasi* cut the thirty-two hand-long *dhwamā* from the lower section of an enormous tree. The tree must be huge, for the finished *dhwamā* must not only bear the full strain of the ropes pulling at the *rath*, but it must also curve upward at the *rath*'s "prow". They select the tree, perform sacrifices to the *ban devi* ("goddess of the forest"), fell the tree, and trim it roughly to shape. The massive *dhwamā* is then dragged back to

¹²Their relationship was described as *khalapim*, a term having several possible meanings, but usually referring to those who claim common descent but who may not all be *phukīpim* (i.e. worship the same *digu dyā*: at the same time as a group).

¹³The wood for the *rath*'s wheels is cut by the *Bārāhī* (see below). It is not clear if the purported custom of each tole providing a portion of the lumber entailed remuneration for the *bwasi*'s efforts, or whether the *bwasi*'s responsibilities evolved later.

¹⁴I did not speak directly to the *bwasi* and have been unable to locate "Kwenca" on any map. Though I do not doubt the existence of the village, I cannot confirm that this is a conventional spelling. This information comes from *Bārāhī* informants who cooperate closely with the *bwasi*.

Bungamati.¹⁵ Though a new *dhwamā* must be made only once every twelve years, they do occasionally break and require replacement. This, however, seldom if ever requires felling a new tree, for many neighborhood rest-houses in Patan are graced with *dhwamās* from past *rath jātrās*.¹⁶ If a *dhwamā* breaks during the course of the *jātrā*, one of these retired *dhwamās* is usually pressed back into service.¹⁷

Carpenters: The work of making and assembling the wooden *rath* pieces is done by a *guthī* of twenty-four *Tacikārs*, one of the many artisan sub-castes of Patan.¹⁸ This twenty-four member *guthī* is drawn from a clan more commonly known as *Bārāhīs*.¹⁹ The latter title is related to the origins of their role in the *jātrā*, which will be discussed in the second half of this chapter. Their role is one of the most intensively demanding in the *rath jātrā*. Though the period they spend reassembling the wooden *rath* pieces every year amounts to only a few days, the

¹⁵The tree is usually brought from Godavari forest, a distance of at least eight kilometers.

¹⁶These *dhwamās* are typically placed in front of the rest-houses where they function as long benches. See also Slusser 1984:143, who incorrectly identifies the *dhwamā* as "*ghama*."

¹⁷This happened during the *jātrā* of 1984 as the *rath* was being pulled from Pore tol. A *dhwamā* was taken from a very long resthouse located in Pulchowk in which *dhwamās* are customarily stored. The installation of the second *dhwamā* entailed a *śanti puja* to the Bhairab mask which is placed on its front, though no sacrifices were offered.

¹⁸They are not *vyāpus*, as suggested by Locke (1980:268), and do not normally marry *vyāpus*. They intermarry with *Silpakārs*, *Tamrakārs*, *Rajkarnikārs* (sweet makers), and other artisan *jāts*.

¹⁹Though the *Bārāhī* use the term "*tacikār*" in contrasting themselves with other subcastes, such as *Tamrakār*, one informant stated that all *tacikār* were *Bārāhī*. This may be due to an extension of the use of one clan name to characterize the entire sub-caste due to the fame of the *Bārāhī* but as is often the case when attempting to differentiate between sub-caste and clan names, the distinction remains unclear.

Bārāhī must also refurbish and replace these parts when necessary and completely re-make them every twelve years. As noted above, they must make new wheels more often, a process which takes several weeks of hard work.²⁰ The *Bārāhī* are also responsible for refurbishing the wooden supports for the metal *lhusā* which decorate the *rath*. Their annual work begins two months before the annual bathing ceremony, when they must take inventory of the *rath* parts which need replacement. They make a list of the parts needed, and place the list at the feet of Bungadya in Ta Baha. People from Bungamati then come to fetch the list, which is then conveyed to the *bwasi* who cut the necessary wood.²¹

In addition to the physical labor they invest in the *rath jātrā*, the *Bārāhī* have the most extensive ritual and feasting responsibilities of any of those involved in the *jātrā* other than the *pānju* attendants and principal *pujari*. The extensive cycle of ritual events and work obligations observed by the *Bārāhī* will be described in more detail in the second half of this chapter where the *Bārāhī*'s explanations for their important role will be examined.

Vine lashers: A *guthī* of twelve *Yangwals*, a *jyāpu* sub-caste, are responsible for lashing the many parts of the *rath* together. No metal nails, bolts, or screws are used in assembling the *rath*, making the work of the vine lashers particularly

²⁰*Bārāhī* informants state that outsiders used to help with this tasks and receive some compensation. Now no one assists, for the compensation is only three *manas* (1 *mana* ≈ 1 U.S. pint) of rice and three *manas* of *baji* per day.

²¹Previously, the people of Bungamati fetched this list from Ta Baha and presented it to the *dwāre*, or headman, of Bungamati. Though the status of the *dwāre* is still recognized to some degree, the village *pradhan pancha* is technically the local authority under the *pāncayat* system. It is not clear whether someone who is informally recognized as the *dwāre* summons the *bwasi* as before, or if someone else plays this role.

important.²² Though the *guthī* includes a dozen members, the *Guthī Samsthan* hires other workers at fourteen rupees a day to assist the *guthīyars*.²³ Each of the *guthīyars* receives 400 rupees for their labors during the *jātrā*, and the foreman (*nāya:*) and assistant foreman (*bhai nāya:*) receive additional compensation from *patāha* donors whenever they install a *patāha* over the course of the *jātrā*. Beyond the initial task of lashing the *rath* together, the *Yangwal* are frequently called over the course of the *jātrā* to tighten the various ropes and vines that invariably loosen as the *rath* lurches along its route. Two senior *Yangwal*, usually the foremen, ride the *rath*'s spire as the *rath* is pulled and receive the token payment distributed by the *Yela juju* sword bearer at the end of each day the *rath* is pulled and on the three *bhujā* days.

The efforts of the *Yangwal* are coordinated with those of the *Bārāhī*. Two *Bārāhī* and two *Yangwal* position the *hamwakhim* posts upon which the *rath* chassis rests until the wheels are installed. The *Bārāhī* start by assembling only the bottom half of the *rath*. The *Yangwal* then lash this lower portion together, and then the *Bārāhī* install the wheels and complete the upper part of the framework, which the *Yangwal* then secure with lashings of vine and rope. Each group observes restrictions on what and with whom they may eat while they are building the *rath*, and each member of both *guthīs* takes responsibility in turn for providing a midday feast for their co-workers. However, the two groups do not eat together

²²I have only found two exceptions to this rule; the basket-like portion of the *baymwa:* is fastened to a central wooden core using iron split-pins, and, as noted below, the wheels incorporate some iron parts.

²³Though Locke (1980:268) may be correct in suggesting that a total of thirty *Yangwals* are sought by the *Guthī Samsthan* to work each year (approximately that number were involved in the years I observed the *jātrā*), they are not simply appointed each year as he suggests.

even when their work in Pulcowk over-laps. Though they cooperate in several *pujās* performed while the *rath* is being built²⁴ and coordinate their efforts while building it, the *Bārāhī* and *Yangwal* are mutually suspicious of each other. They must depend on each other to build a strong *rath*, and either group can make the other look bad.²⁵

Ironsmiths: Though little metal is used in the construction of the *rath*, bands of iron are used around the hubs of the *rath* wheels, and the axles are currently made of steel.²⁶ In addition to being called in to repair the wheels, members of one family of iron smiths come to nail the three painted brass eyes of Bhairab on each of the *rath*'s wheels at the beginning of the *jātrā* each year.

Pānjus and the *jātrā* jajman: The principal *pujari pānju* and several *pānju* assistants conduct an elaborate *rath* consecration *pujā* mid-way through the construction of the *rath*.

Painters: The same *Citrakārs* who are responsible for painting the pots used in the *daśa karma pujā* also paint the *dhwamā*, wheels, and *khajula* (balcony-like deck) of the *rath*. They paint portions of the wheels and *khajula* orange, and paint a picture of Hayagriba Bhairab on the front of the *dhwamā* and long dragon-

²⁴See appendix, *Cahile/Hanumvakhim puja*, and *Pānista puja*.

²⁵See below with respect to the *Bārāhīs*' suspicions concerning the *Yangwal*'s theft of *patāhas*.

²⁶Until the reign of Chandra Shamsher Rana (1901-1929), the axles of the *rath* were made of wood. One year during his reign as prime minister, the axles broke five times while the *rath* was circumambulating *maju sima*. General Gehendra Shamsher is said to have suggested that new axles be made of bronze gun-metal, and oversaw their casting by a *Nakami* whose descendant cast the steel axles used today. The steel axles were first used about ten years ago. The last bronze axle can be seen in Ta Baha, its twenty centimeter girth cracked through.

like images on both its sides.²⁷ All three of these paintings on the *dhwamā* are later covered by metal *lhusā* bearing the same motifs.

Lhusā guthī: Locke states that the current *lhusā guthī* was founded in 1654 by those who donated the current *lhusā*, or gilt metal decorative panels which are fitted to the *rath* (1980:267,304).²⁸ He notes that the *guthī* was founded in order to maintain the *lhusā* and provide for their transport to the *rath* each year. The current *guthī* is comprised of only one member, though there used to be seven or eight. The membership is drawn from the *Vajrācāryas* of the Mahabauddha Baha *saṃgha*. There remains a substantial amount of *guthī* land

²⁷Though some say that these paintings represent *nāgas*, they are more accurately described as *makharas*, a kind of beast which often adorns water spouts where *nāgas* reside. Several paintings also suggest that the *makhara* figure is more appropriately construed as a vehicle of the *nāga* kings, an interpretation which may be at odds with some popular perceptions, but which explains an obvious contradiction between popular images of *Nāgas* elsewhere and the paintings on the *rath*.

²⁸Locke (1980:304) cites a story told by the Mahabauddha *guthīyars* in which the origins of the gold used to make the current *lhusā* are said to come from an offering made by the *Rāja* of Sikkim in response to a gift of *prasād* from the Mahabauddha temple brought to him by one of the Mahabauddha *saṃgha* members. The sole remaining *guthīyar* cited a different story which also involves the munificence of a foreign devotee. In his version, the first *lhusā* were made of solid gold, part of a fortune earned by a poor *Vajrācārya* goldsmith who went to Lhasa to find wealth. While in Lhasa, the *Vajrācārya* had gradually saved vast amounts of gold, beating it into sheets and hiding it under his bed as it accumulated. When he wished to leave Lhasa he grew worried that the authorities might not let him pass with his treasure, and he went into a deep meditation to determine what to do. His family, thinking him dead, started lamenting, and attracted the attention of a Lama at the palace. The Lama also went into meditation, and divined that not only was the goldsmith alive, but that he had made a vow to make *lhusā* for the *rath* of Bungadya if he managed to leave Tibet with his treasure. Impressed with his piety, the lama went to the goldsmith and provided safe passage for him and his treasure back to Nepal. Subsequently the *rath* caught fire, and all the gold *lhusā* dripped like water onto the street. Some of the gold was retrieved and used to gild the current *lhusā*, the rest of the gold was found by residents in the area, which is why the *Sākya* in Hakka tole are so rich.

(36 *ropanis*), but the sole remaining *guthīyar* complains of having difficulty extracting the *guthī*'s share of the proceeds from its tenants. In addition to the obligations that Locke cites, this *guthī* also provides a feast for a few of the *Bārāhī* who come to repair the *lhusā* each year before they are placed on the *rath*.

***Lhusā* bearers:** A clan of *gyāpus* takes the *lhusā* to the *rath* and returns them to Mahabauddha Baha every year, for which the *lhusā guthī* pays them in grain. It is forbidden for anyone else to take the *lhusā* to the *rath*, or for the *lhusā* to be transported in a vehicle.

Juniper bough providers: A group of *gyāpus* bring boughs of juniper greens from Bagh Duwal, the source of the Bagmati river on the northern rim of the valley, to cover the *rath* spire. This is done once on *akṣyatrītyā* at the beginning of the *jātrā* and again on the final leg of the *jātrā* to Jawalakhel.

Many others could also be included in this list, such as those who provide the metal *patāhas* which decorate the *rath* each year, the children who drag the *dhwamā* from its storage place to the *rath*, the *gākhus* who make offerings to the wheels of the *rath* before it moves, the *dyā: pālā* of the *bāhā*: in which the *hamwakhim* posts are stored, the homeowners who provide a space for the *rath* builders to have their feasts, and so on. Before the chariot even moves, those who have built it have already played important roles in the *rath jātrā*. The burdens entailed in performing these roles vary from minor inconvenience to a major transformation of one's daily life.

Principals of Task Delegation and Compensation

In many instances, the allocation of responsibilities involved in the examples cited above conform to traditional sub-caste occupations, though in several cases

they do not. The *Niyekhu* claim to have descended from palace functionaries, and are in no way but for their role in the *jātrā* linked to painting or sculpting. Though the *vyāpus* generally perform physical labor in the *jātrā*, there is no link between their particular roles in the *jātrā* and any occupational specialization associated with their subcaste with the exception of the *suwa:* who cook.

The responsibilities entailed in the *rath jātrā* generally constitute a financial liability. For a few young hired laborers it may provide an opportunity to earn some additional income before the demands of the monsoon growing season are at their peak. But most are motivated to endure whatever hardship their work may entail by a sense of obligation to tradition and desire to honor Bungadya, coupled, in some cases, with a fear of the possible consequences should one shirk ones responsibilities. The burden of *jātrā* responsibilities varies widely from task to task as well as from individual to individual. Even though some individuals may be obligated to perform the same tasks, the burden which these tasks represent can vary considerably from one person to the next. In a few rare cases, wealthy *guthī* members pay others to perform some of their more tiresome duties. At the other extreme, the demands of the *jātrā* and the meager compensation (if any) which is provided for the time and effort expended can make participation a real sacrifice for someone of limited means.

Whatever hardship is entailed by participation in the *jātrā* - and hardship is a feature of the *jātrā* stressed by nearly all who play a major role - the prestige, and in some cases, privilege, which is associated with playing a major part is clearly gratifying. Though the *Yangwal*, for example, have a relatively low social status compared with many others who work on the *rath*, only they have the right to stand on its spire, occupying a position higher than Bungadya himself. A more

broadly appreciated benefit of performing "the god's work" than the prestige associated with conspicuous participation are the numerous feasts which participants are often privileged and even obligated to eat. The scale of feasting associated with this *jātrā* is unmatched by any other.²⁹ This brief consideration of the compensation which *jātrā* workers receive leads to the next area of concern: the perspective of the *jātrā* participant on his or her role with respect to the responsibilities and privileges it entails.

The Logic of Obligation

Four roles which are central to the *jātrā* will now be examined with respect to how those who fulfill them explain the origins of their positions and the obligations they entail. These four positions, *Pānju*, *Bārāhī*, *Mālini*, and *Rājopādhyay*, have been selected for the broad range of contrasts which they encompass: Hindu priests and Buddhist priests, men and women, handsomely rewarded and virtually uncompensated, high caste and low caste. In spite of their differences, those who hold these offices all have fundamentally similar stories to tell. They attribute their privileged status and associated obligations to their exceptional proximity to the divine, whether it is widely recognized or not. This proximity may be attributed to kinship, servitude, gender, or even retribution for prior indifference.

²⁹The one possible exception to this may be the Kathmandu *Samyek*, though the feasting in this case occurs only on one day once every twelve years, as opposed to over a period of two months or more every year in the case of the Bungaya.

The *Pānjus*

The *Pānjus* offer several explanations for their privileged position as the priests to Bungadya. The myth of origin of the *jātrā* detailed in Chapter V is the basis of one explanation; they are the descendants of Bandhudatta Vajracarya.³⁰ Some *pānjus*, however, make a distinction between those who are his descendents and those who are not. Others cite the story, noted above, that they were originally from the *saṃgha* at Swayambhu and were appointed as priests to Bungadya after his arrival in Nepal. They cite the arrangement whereby the members of Swayambhu *bāhā* would assume the responsibilities of the Bungadya *saṃgha* if it ever died out (and vice-versa) as evidence of this ancient tie (cf. Locke 1985:238).

All *pānjus* agree that Bungadya is the thirty-second *pānju*. The *saṃgha* of Amarapur in Bungamati is comprised of 325 *Śākyas* and *Vajrācāryas* (Locke 1985:237), but there can never be more than thirty-one *pānjus* within this group, not counting Bungadya, who brings the total to the auspicious number of thirty-two.³¹ Bungadya's identity as a *pānju* is articulated during the *daśa karma puṣā* when Bungadya as well as his *jhal* and *khal* *pānju* attendants don the special red and white cotton robe which only *pānjus* wear.

The fact that there are only thirty-one lucrative *pānju* positions available heightens the competition among potential *pānjus* whenever a vacancy is open. Positions become open upon a *pānju*'s demise, though they are not usually filled

³⁰Recall that both *Śākyas* and *Vajrācāryas* can be descendants of *Vajrācāryas*, for the child of a *Vajrācārya* and a *Śākya* is a *Śākya*.

³¹Those *Śākyas* and *Vajrācāryas* who live in Bungamati but who are not *pānjus* are referred to as "*thyābare*", or "other *bare*", one of the few common uses of *bare* to refer to *Vajrācāryas* as well as *Śākyas*.

immediately. Seven of the *pānjus* are *Vajrācāryas*, and the other twenty-four are *Śākyas*.³² New *pānjus* must be chosen in accordance with this balance. The *guthī samsthan* makes this choice, which at one time was purportedly based primarily on considerations concerning an individual's character, knowledge, and other qualifications. Now an interested applicant must submit a bid to the *guthī samsthan* stating how much he is willing to pay for the position which is essentially auctioned off to the highest bidder. Locke reports that 8,000 rupees was paid for the office in 1975 (1980:255). In 1982 the younger brother of the most recently initiated *pānju* at the time paid 10,000 Rs., and in 1983 another *thyābare* won the office for a bid of 17,000 Rs., over \$1,100 U.S. dollars at that time.³³

The latter two positions were open well over a year before the *Guthī Samsthan* accepted bids, which it solicited in newspaper advertisements.³⁴ In both cases, the announcement was made only four or five months before the annual bathing ceremony. The new *pānjus* were selected only a month or so before the

³²This would suggest that Bungadya, the thirty second *pānju*, is considered a *Vajrācārya*, as confirmed by the *aca luyegu* performed at his *daśa karma puḷā*, for groupings of 25 and 7 are unlikely to be ritually prescribed. Locke (1980:257) has suggested that this arrangement may have originated from an original 31 founding families who decided that only one member of each would serve in the increasingly important role of *pānju*.

³³I have not noted the tendency, described by Locke, for the sons of the most recently deceased *pānju* to take his place (1980:255). Instead, it is more likely to be a relative of someone who has recently served as *jhal* or *khal pānju*, for it is they who have extra capital.

³⁴Gorkhapatra, *Mansir*, 2 gate, 2040, pg. 8 (Nov. 18, 1983). The actual term used is the Nepali word "*salami*," which Turner (1980:592) defines as "A gift given to a superior from whom an interview is desired." It is only within the past twenty years that this "gift" has grown to exorbitant proportions.

first *pujā* which would require their presence had to be performed.³⁵ These delays in opening the bidding were apparently timed so that the winner would be one of the *pānjus* to ride the *rath* in the next *jātrā*, making the financial incentive to attain the office that much greater.³⁶ The privilege of riding in the *rath* is rotated in strict order of initiation as a *pānju*.³⁷ Positions have remained unfilled for long periods of time until the cycle of turns (*pālā*) came to the junior *pānju* so that the incoming *pānju* could immediately benefit from participating in the *jātrā* as the *jhal* or *khal* *pānju*.

The *pānjus* from the *jātrā* in 1984 each reported taking in over 16,000 rupees over the course of the *jātrā*. This income has steadily grown over the last several years according to both my observations and the statements of the *pānjus*.³⁸ In addition to the income received over the course of the *rath jātrā*, the *pānjus* also receive a stipend from a special *pānju* *guthi*, and are entitled to some

³⁵i.e. the *yachin kāyegu pujās* which require the presence of the *jhal* and/or *khal pānju* who will be in the upcoming *jātrā*.

³⁶Prior to the last *pānju* selection in 1983, a *thyābare* friend from Bungamati asked if I would be interested in purchasing some land from him, for he was desperately trying to raise money to make a competitive bid for the vacant office.

³⁷Locke reports that the order of seniority among the *pānjus* with respect to their authority within the larger *samgha* of 325 members is based on the date of initiation into the *samgha*, not the date of their initiation as *pānju* (1980:257). Given that *samgha* initiations (i.e. *bare chuyegu*) are usually performed for groups, seniority must be determined, in part, by age, for the novices are initiated in this order during the rite. The privilege of riding in the *rath*, however, clearly rotates in order of the date the candidate became a *pānju*.

³⁸One *pānju* informant stated that in 1971 the daily income received from monetary donations offered at the *rath* amounted to only sixteen rupees on the average, but by 1981 it had risen to thirty-five rupees per day, then to over 100 Rs. per day in 1982 and 250 Rs. per day in 1983. Though inflation is currently rampant in Nepal, the increases reported here clearly outstrip inflation from 1981 - 1983.

of the proceeds from the larger *guthī* holdings which are shared by all of the Amarapur *saṃgha* members (cf. Locke 1985:237). The income from the *jātrā* comes only once every sixteen years, and is offset to some degree by *pānju* initiation expenses which amount to several thousand rupees. Many *pānjus* also work as skilled artisans, one is a teacher, and most do some agricultural work. Only one works essentially full-time as a priest. Though the *pānjus* who sit with the god during the *jātrā* often complain that they receive less than they hoped for, their expectations are typically high. The position of *pānju* is the only role in the *jātrā* that clearly entails substantial financial benefits, and it is avidly sought with that in mind.³⁹

The *Bārāhī*

The carpenters who build the *rath* claim to have originally come to Nepal from Kamarup, having followed shortly after Bungadya. They also say that have the same *digu dyā:* as Bungadya. During the *rath jātrā* they offer their *digu dyā: pujā* to Purnacandī⁴⁰ not only for themselves, but for Bungadya as well, as if he were a member of their *phukī*. They state that the *pānjus* are supposed to send

³⁹Other considerations also contribute to the desirability of being a *pānju*, including the opportunity to serve Bungadya and benefit from the intimate association with this benevolent god. *Pānjus* also enjoy an enhanced social status which is widely recognized in the valley and particularly marked in Bungamati. For other benefits and requirements which apply to *pānjus*, see Locke 1980, pp. 256-258.

⁴⁰A goddess, to whom the Barahi also refer as Siddhi Laksmi, located in a temple near Ga Baha. The immediate locality takes its name from this goddess.

offerings over to them from the *rath* while they are performing the *digu dyā: puja* on Bungadya's behalf.⁴¹

The *Bārāhī* not only claim kinship with Bungadya, but a former status as *pānju* as well. They state that the *khal pānju* used to be a *Bārāhī*, but one year the *Bārāhī khal pānju* went to an outlying village (Kamani) to marry and stayed there with his young wife,⁴² compelling the *pānjus* to supply a *khal pānju* from among their own. They cite several traditions in support of their contention that they were once *pānjus*. The *Bārāhī*, for example, have rights to "one half" of the offerings made during the *jātrā*, though this amount has been fixed at a level far lower than what the *pānjus* actually receive.⁴³ They are also entitled to one half of the cloth *patāhas* from the *rath* after the *jātrā* has ended.⁴⁴ The *yangwal*, whom the *Bārāhī* accuse of keeping some *patāhas* for themselves, bring the *patāhas* to

⁴¹The *pānjus* deny that this is Bungadya's *digu dyā:*, and do not contribute anything to the *Bārāhī's digu dyā: pujā*.

⁴²Though the theme of gods and people straying for the sake of love is quite common, this is an unusual mythological reference to uxori-local marriage, or the *dolaji* (cf. *infra.*, Chapter. 3).

⁴³They are entitled to 25 *anna* (an archaic coin, equal to fourteen paisa, or less than one cent), 24 *pattis* of unhusked rice (about 3 bushels), 24 *pattis* of husked rice, 48 pieces of *chatamari* (bread), and 48 *gwa:jās*, or dough offerings (*torma*, Tb.).

⁴⁴The *patāha* are valued for their curative powers. They are said to be particularly effective for curing stomach ailments, and are simply wrapped around the torso of the patient in order to effect a cure. The *pānjus'* wives also make special garments for their spouses from *patāhas*.

the *Bārāhī* *thakālī*'s house, and the *pānjus* go there to divide them with the *Bārāhī*.⁴⁵

Though they describe themselves as Hindus, the *Bārāhī* observe some of the same restrictions as *pānjus* while the *rath jātrā* is in progress. Until they perform their (and Bungadya's) *dīgu dyā:* puja, they must abstain from having sexual intercourse and avoid eating garlic, and throughout the *jātrā* they refrain from eating chicken meat or chicken eggs, a peculiarly Buddhist prohibition.⁴⁶ The day after the god is put in the *rath* the *Bārāhī* shave their heads, as the *pānjus* must shave theirs several days earlier.⁴⁷

Another part of their tradition which the *Bārāhī* cite as an indication of their former high status is the extensive initiation rite which the *Bārāhī nāya:* must undergo. Like the *pānjus*, there is a group with limited membership within the *Bārāhī guthī* which enjoys special privileges after undergoing initiation. There are sixteen *nāya:* positions which may be filled from among the 24 *guthī* members, though the high cost of this initiation (5,000 - 6,000 Rs.) prevents some who are eligible from being initiated. The most distinctive feature of this rite is the *chaurasi banjan* (84 dish) feast which must be offered to Bungadya, the *pānjus*, and others, including the initiate and his wife. *Bārāhīs* who are in a state of purity, wearing gauze over their mouths and noses lest they pollute their burden, bring the food

⁴⁵Though the fact that the *yangwa!* bring the *patāha* to the *Bārāhī* indicates the *yangwa!*'s lower status, the fact that the *Bārāhī* are not entitled to climb the *rath* to retrieve the *patāhas* clearly puts them at a disadvantage, a situation which the *yangwals* are accused of illicitly using to their advantage.

⁴⁶This recalls a well known story in which a chicken came to the aid of the Buddha by plucking maggots from his wounded toe.

⁴⁷Though in the case of the *pānjus* no lock of hair is left behind as it is for the *Bārāhī*.

for this four-day feast to Bungamati. The following story, as told by a *Bārāhī nāya*:, accounts for the custom of this initiation feast.

As Matsyendra⁴⁸ was born in a country of *racheses*, he used to take everything, but now, as he is a *Bhagwan*, he cannot. "What to do [he said]. Here I cannot eat [meat, alcohol] but you must [in order to do your work]." The *Bārāhī* said to Matsyendra that unless you take meat, neither will we. After arguing, Matsyendra said "All right, on the day a person is born into the *Bārāhī kul* I will take it from his hand." But the *Bārāhī* thought that Matsyendra might trick them, so it was decided that whenever they find a new *nāya*: he will have to offer everything [all kinds of food] to Matsyendranath.

The *Bārāhī* view this initiation as analogous to that of the *pānjus*, and state that, after being initiated, they too can touch the image of Bungadya.⁴⁹

Other *Bārāhī* undergo a shorter initiation called *gwe dan* (the gift of betel nut). In an unusual parallel with the *bare*, if a *Bārāhī* does not make the *gwe dan* offering, his sons cannot become *Bārāhīs*,⁵⁰ just as *bare* who fail to take initiation cannot pass their caste status on to their offspring. Admission to the *Bārāhī guthī* of twenty four and the *nāya: luyemha* (initiated *nāya:s*) group of sixteen is at the discretion of the *thakāli*, who usually bases his decisions on seniority. Though they are renumerated for some of their efforts during the *jātrā*, this compensation does not make the position of *Bārāhī guthīyar* financially advantageous, especially considering the number of feasts and other responsibilities which *guthī* membership entails.

⁴⁸It is not unusual for Newars to use the name Matsyendra when telling the myth of origin of the *jātrā*.

⁴⁹They state that on occasions when the *rath* falls over and is severely damaged, they must extract the god from its ruins.

⁵⁰If a *Bārāhī* marries outside his caste, comprised of the agglomeration of sub-castes noted above, he cannot be initiated as a *nāya*: and his offspring cannot become members of the *Bārāhī guthī*. A *Bārāhī* who married a "*Khem*", or *Parbatiyā*, woman was in this position, for example.

The *Bārāhī* account for their unusual title, meaning "boar", with the following story which clearly expresses not only the origins of this name, but also the theme of royal pressure being brought to bear on *jātrā* workers to ensure that they do their work properly.

it is because of the boar's snout (*baraha*⁵¹ *twa*) that we have our name, *Bārāhī*. Once when they had to build a wheel, they went into the forest to cut a tree. In those days trees could hear, so when the tree heard them discussing which kind of tree would be strong and deciding which one would be suitable, the tree [intended for cutting] hid in the mud. They could not find the tree anywhere. They were afraid, for they had received the strictest orders to come back with the wood under threat of *jya dan sarkar* (impounding of all property). So they wandered about the forest crying. *Ban devi* (goddess of the forest) [having heard their cries] told them to make a boar's snout and use it to dig up the hiding tree. The *Bārāhī* did a *pujā* to *ban devi*, made the *baraha twa*, and found the tree. The *baraha twa* is still worshipped at the place it used to hang on the wall at I Bahi. It has been stolen and could not be replaced for even ten *lakhs* of rupees. It was 1,400 years old.

Though the *Bārāhī* claim privileged access to and kinship with Bungadya, their relationship with the Bhairabs embodied in the wheels which they make seems to be of equal, if not greater concern to them. Danger is associated with the wheels even before they are put on the *rath* and constitute a threat when the *rath* is rolling. This is obvious from the fact that twenty-five animals must be sacrificed during the process of procuring lumber for the wheels and building them. This figure includes the offerings to *ban devi* noted in the story above, as well as sacrifices offered to the trees to be felled, the timbers once trimmed, the wheels in various stages of completion, and to Bisvakarma, the patron god of artisans.

⁵¹Derived from the Sanskrit, *varāha* ("b" and "v" are frequently allophonic in Newari).

The following stories, offered by two different *Bārāhī*, portray the dangers which the *Bārāhī* perceive as part of their responsibilities. These dangers stem from their relationship with the Bhairabs who are embodied in the wheels they build.

Once a broken wheel was left in Lhu hiti, and no one dared to even touch it. Then on *Siva Rātri* night (when fires are burned in front of all gods recognized as Shiva) someone burned the wheel and died shortly thereafter.

Once, when I was small, while helping to build the new wheels, I became hungry, and went to Bidya Lal's shop to buy bread. I was hungry so I ate the bread without first offering any to the wheels.⁵² That night I dreamt that the whole wheel was put on my body. Then, a figure, Bhairab *dyā:*, like a man but with a huge face,⁵³ told me that I would have to place the *ha:* (part of wheel) by myself.⁵⁴ But I couldn't because I was small. He said that if I don't, then I will press you with the wheel. I was frightened. I woke up and felt a tremendous heat in my body. I went to another room to sleep and stayed in bed, ill, for twenty eight days.

Once Purna Bahadur was offering a sacrificial animal (*ba:*) [to the wheels] and did not cut its throat properly, making it necessary for him to twist its head [to break its neck]. So three or four days later, the god stepped on his feet (i.e. rolled over them). He then dreamed that the god stepped on his feet and grasped his head and asked "Shall I kill you as you killed the *ba:*?"⁵⁵ Purna Bahadur did not die, but is still not well.

⁵²Every day, while building the *rath* or working on the wheels, offerings are made to the wheels (or *rath* chassis if the wheels have not yet been installed) before the *Bārāhī* have their communal meal. Before any meal, the Newar offer a token portion of their food and drink to the gods by placing a bit of food and sprinkling some of their beverage on the floor.

⁵³The image of Hayagriba Bhairab at Bungamati is a huge gilded metal face with hands holding a skull cap under its mouth.

⁵⁴The *ha:* are large pie-shaped sections of the wheel which are analogous to spokes, but which fit together to form a solid wheel. They are heavy and must be wedged very tightly into place.

⁵⁵Often, when a goat or sheep is sacrificed, one man grasps the forequarters of the animal while another holds its feet.

The *Bārāhī* express their proximity to Bungadya in many different ways: by claiming their former status as priests, their *phukī* relationship, their common origins in Kamarup, and their current initiated status which, from their point of view, permits them to touch the image and asserts their commensality with the god. They are second only to the *pānjus* with respect to their level of involvement in the *jātrā* from nearly any perspective one might imagine, whether it be financial, psychological, temporal, or ritual. The image of the god which is passed from each *Bārāhī thakāli* to the next, however, is not of Bungadya, but Bhairab. The complementarity involved in the worship of these two deities is nowhere more clearly embodied than in the beliefs, obligations, and privileges which are shared by the *Bārāhī guṭhīyars*. The maintenance of their privileged status with respect to Bungadya demand that the *Bārāhī* repeatedly propiciate Bhairabs with blood sacrifices.

The *Mālini*

The *Mālini* is responsible for bringing the *kalaś* which "contains" Bungadya back from Koduwa and for bringing the water and *pujā* implements used each morning during the *jātrā* for the *nitya pujā*. Her role in the *jātrā* is of particular interest because it is the only role of such prominence which must be performed by a woman. She describes herself as a "descendant" (*santan*) of Lalita Jyapu, and has inherited the role initially played by him when Bungadya first came to Nepal. *Mālini*, meaning "gardener," is a term frequently used to refer to the *jyāpu*

and his wife who went to fetch Bungadya.⁵⁶ *gyāpus* were traditionally obligated to carry their landlord's *pujā* equipment,⁵⁷ and the mythology of the *jātrā* reflects this tradition. As is typical among the *gyāpu*, the *Mālini* considers herself to be both a follower of the Buddhist *dharma* and a devotee of Lord Shiva.⁵⁸

The role of *Mālini* is passed along the female members and wives of the men of one patriline. No man ever assumes the role of *Mālini*. If a *Mālini* inherited her title from her mother, then her successor would be her brother's wife, who would assume the title shortly after marrying into the *Mālini* patriline. If a *Mālini* who inherited her position has no brothers, the line would die out. If the *Mālini* acquired her title through marriage, then her successor would be her daughter (if she is unmarried),⁵⁹ or her son's wife. The *Mālini* becomes ineligible for the role if she is widowed, so the title is passed on in the event of either her demise or that of her husband (see diagram).⁶⁰

⁵⁶As noted in the metamyth given in chapter five, many versions of this myth refer to a *gyāpu* couple who accompany Bandhudatta and Narendradeva, rather than just Lalita Gyapu. Surprisingly, my most loquacious *mālini* informant did not refer to this version.

⁵⁷ Though *gyāpus* still perform this work in the *jātrā*, the stipulations of landlord-tenant obligations which were a part of land reform, combined with an increase in other employment opportunities, make it difficult for a landlord to demand this service of his *gyāpu* tenants.

⁵⁸"*Bauddha dharma na wa, Śiva margi na wa, āle chu yāye?*"

⁵⁹Evidently the current *mālini* has received numerous matrimonial inquiries from the people of Kathmandu, who, according to her mother, regard her as a god (cf. *infra* concerning her status as Karunamaya during Koduwa *mela*). This is quite the opposite of the situation of the incarnation of Taleju known as the Kumari, who though wealthy and powerful, is also regarded as extremely dangerous.

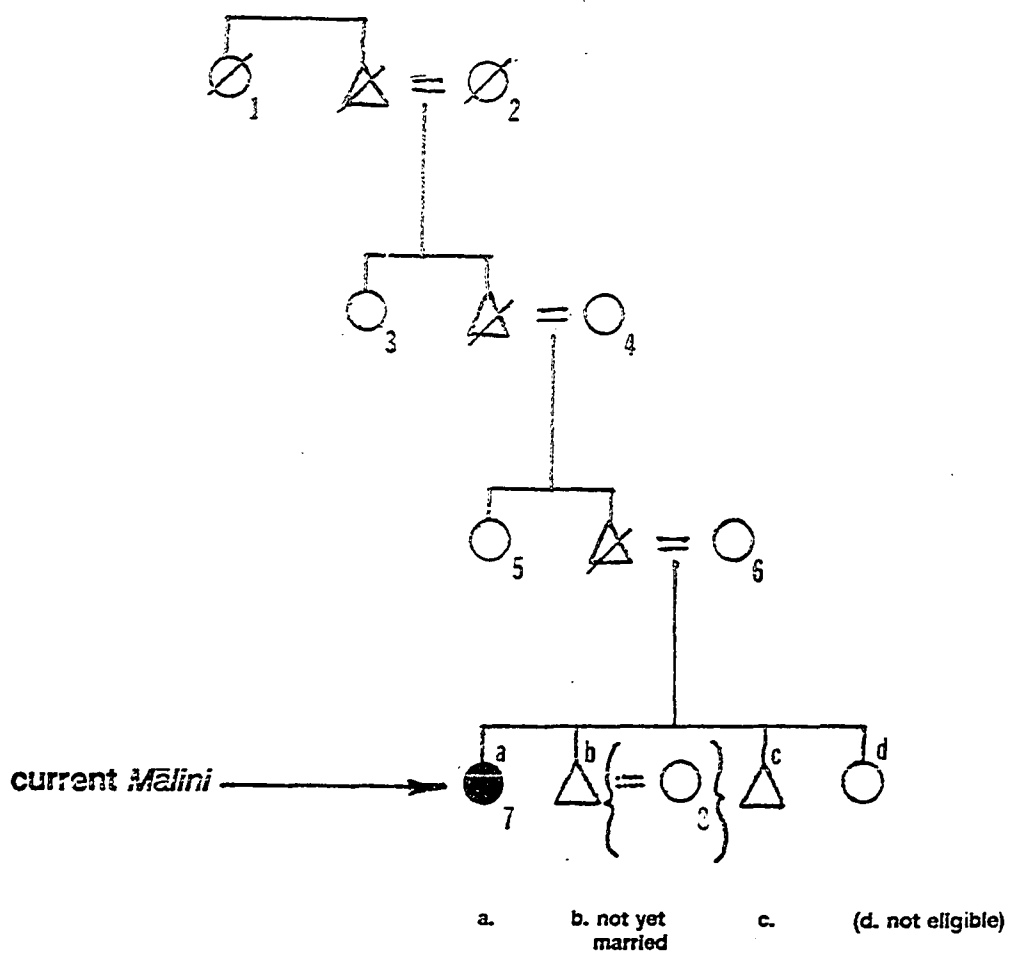
⁶⁰Klass (1961) notes a similar form of descent from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law among midwives in Trinidad, which he has dubbed "socrulineality."

When asked why only women are *Mālinis*, the mother of the present *Mālini* immediately responded, "Because Karunamaya is a woman!" She then elaborated on this statement to say that Karunamaya was both man and woman, a *visvarupa dyā*: (single god comprised of the characteristics of two).⁶¹ As noted previously, Newars allude to the bisexuality of Bungadya when they speak of *ini yāyegu* while referring to the *daśa karma puja* of which it is a part, and refer to Bungamati or Koduwa as Bungadya's *thāchem* (paternal home of woman). The *Mālini*'s interpretation of her status is a radical manifestation of this widely recognized characteristic of Bungadya.

If a *Mālini* has inherited her title from her mother, then she does not require any initiation in order to assume the role. If however, a woman is to become a *Mālini* through marriage, she must be initiated in order to assume the title and so that she may share food with her husband. This initiation (*dekha*) is referred to as the *gupta puja* (private *puja*), and is administered secretly by the *pānjus* in the *āgam* of the *Mālini*'s house. The *pānjus* bring their *āgam dyā*: and seven banner paintings with them to perform this initiation.⁶² This initiation confers the responsibilities of the *Mālini* onto the initiate, and entitles the new *Mālini* to touch Bungadya.

⁶¹She supported this statement by noting that a woman carries one of the *kalaśes* containing Bungadya, and that the god inside is therefore a woman, as if to imply that the second *kalaś*, carried by a man, contained the male aspect of the god. The term "*visvarupa*" as used here conforms to common Newar usage. Though most often used to refer to gods with both male and female aspects (*śakti dyā*:, *barupa dyā*:), the term is apparently derived from the universal form of Vishnu in which he appeared to Arjuna as related in the Mahabharata.

⁶²The *āgam dyā*: they bring is apparently an image of Yogambara, which they carry with them to the initiation in a sack at night.

Mālini Succession

a - d = sibling order
 1 - 8 = order of succession

In addition to the obligations described above, the *Mālini* must perform an annual *pujā* to Hayagriba Bhairab in Bungamati, where she should sacrifice a goat and provide a feast for seven of the *pānjus*, but is currently only able to bring rice liquor for the feast. She is also supposed to offer a sacrifice at *maju sima* on the night of the bathing ceremony, but can't afford to. For the *Mālini*, her role in the *jātrā* is clearly a serious financial and physical burden. The six- rupee duck-eggs which are required for offerings are extravagances she can ill-afford, and the goats she should offer are beyond her means. Her daily regimen, which she usually performs in the company of her mother,⁶³ requires her to arise at two or three in the morning every day while the *rath jātrā* is in progress in order to wash, fetch the water, and get to the *rath* with the *pujā* materials in time for the *nitya pujā*. No one else is entitled to perform these tasks. The honor (*ijat*) of being so closely identified with Bungadya, in addition to the necessity that the *Mālini*'s tasks be performed, evidently compels the *Mālini* to maintain her status in spite of the hardship it entails. In addition to her demanding obligations, however, the *Mālini* is also invited to nearly all of the feasts sponsored by the Ta Baha *guthī samsthan*. Not only do these festive occasions have immeasurable social value, but these feasts also constitute a significant economic benefit for someone of the current *Mālini*'s means.⁶⁴

⁶³Though the title of *mālini* was passed on to her daughter six years previously, *mālini*'s mother still played a major role in the *jātrā* in 1984, for it would have been ill-advised for her young daughter to go alone to the *rath* in the darkness of early morning, let alone on the over-night trip to Koduwa.

⁶⁴Some have stated that the Ta Baha *guthī samsthan* office sponsors nearly 100 feasts every year. Though I was unable to verify this, the *Mālini* and her mother are frequent participants in feasts connected with Bungadya.

The *Rājopādhyay*

The *Rājopādhyay* belong to the highest of the Hindu Newar castes and are considered to be Newar Brahmins. Male members of two *Rājopādhyay* patrilineages ceremonially lead the public in pulling the god's *rath*, and are popularly known as *se baje* ("se priests") after the chant they use to coordinate the crowd (*se!* or *hoste!*). When the *rath* is being pulled, they stand on the central yoke (*dhwamā*) of the *rath* below the sanctum where the god and his Buddhist attendants are located. They also preside over two of the *sāhit* (auspicious moment) *rath* pullings during the *jātrā* and are occasionally called upon to perform *śanti* (pacification) *pujās* if a mishap has occurred during the *jātrā*. The *Rājopādhyay* do not have physical access to the god and receive only a token payment for their "se baje" services.

The role of the *Rājopādhyay* is of particular interest for two reasons. The first is obvious; it addresses the tension which scholars of south asia might expect to find between high status priests of different religious traditions who are both simultaneously and intimately involved in the worship of the same deity. Secondly, in their explanation of the origins of their role, the *Rājopādhyay* discuss the political consequences of proximity to divinity. They elaborate on the relationships of dominance and subordination which animate interaction between subjects, kings, priests and gods.

The *Rājopādhyays'* account of the origins of their status in the *jātrā* is one of the few which does not begin with the coming of Bungadya to Nepal. According to popular tradition and at least one chronical account, King Siddhinarsimha Malla (ruled Patan 1619-1661) established the practice of having *Rājopādhyays* lead the

rath pulling about three and a half centuries ago.⁶⁵ The following account was offered by one of the "Sese" *Rājopādhyay*, who described it as the story of his own family.

During the reign of Siddhinarsimha Malla, the *rath* got stuck in Mahapal [just outside the central square where the royal palace is located] for several days. In those times we Hindus did not pay any attention to Matsyendranath. One day, King Siddhinarsimha Malla looked out from his palace at the *rath* and saw to his astonishment that inside the *rath* was not Matsyendranath but Krishna. He went to look into Krishna's temple, and there he saw not Krishna but Matsyendranath within. He again went to look at the *rath* and saw Krishna, and once again, upon checking the Krishna temple, saw Matsyendranath. He decided to call a conference of religious advisors to determine the meaning of this.

In the meantime, people who came in the morning to the *rath* to make their daily offerings to Matsyendranath found that a dumb boy had miraculously begun to speak, having been entered by Matsyendranath. When the people asked Matsyendranath what to do, the boy/Matsyendranath replied that he would go [back into his image and on with the *rath jātrā*] if the Brahmin who lived here would come to lead the pulling of the *rath*. If the Brahmin failed to do this, he would not go back to the *rath*.

Word of this got back to the king and this too was discussed during his conference with his advisors. One of the king's advisors was Haribamsa Rajopadhyay, an attendant in the Krishna temple where the king had seen Matsyendranath.⁶⁶ Haribamsa revealed that he had become angry with his wife because she had gone to give offerings to Matsyendranath, and he had locked her in a room and denied her food. Having heard all this, the council decided that the *Rājopādhyay* should henceforth lead the pulling of the *rath*. And so it was established that one *Rājopādhyay* from the Patan Krishna temple and one *Rājopādhyay* from Bhaktapur should lead the *rath jātrā* pulling.

⁶⁵Locke (1980:303) cites the chronicle account presented by Hasrat (1970:69) as indicating that this practice was started in 1631. In fact, the chronicle relates that "A brahmin boy of 5 years old, who was attached to the temple of god told the Rajah that unless he would himself become the driver and unless Visvanath (the *rāj guru*) was caused to sit with him and unless a Brahman would hold an umbrella over his (they boy's) head, the car would not move." This is clearly similar to the story given below, but does not, it itself, indicate that any particular custom was established at this point.

⁶⁶Also an ancestor of the individual who told this story.

The fact that only Bhaktapur and Patan *Rājopādhyays* are represented on the *rath* is explicitly related to the fact that Kathmandu has established its own *rath jātrā* for its local *Lokeśwar*, Janmadya. Members of two patriline, one of which has its origins in Bhaktapur, occupy the positions on the *rath* each year.⁶⁷ Siddhinarsimha Malla built the Krishna temple to which the myth refers just opposite his palace in the central square of Patan (*Mangala*).⁶⁸ The Patan *Rājopādhyays* still function as the attendants in this famous temple devoted to one of the most popular deities of the valley.⁶⁹

The story of the origins of their role in the *jātrā* is reminiscent of other tales in which humans intervene in a struggle between gods or in which one god is slighted by the disproportionate respect received by another. Though the story of the *Rājopādhyay* begins on a most unusual note, their flagrant disrespect of Bungadya, it ends on a more familiar theme. They, like many others, complain of a diminution of their status, even though their status in the *jātrā* came as a result of humbling themselves before a god they formally ignored. Until only a few decades ago, their role was not just ceremonial; they actually led the crowds

⁶⁷There is currently only one eligible descendant from the Bhaktapur patriline, so he is present on the *rath* every year. The Patan *Rājopādhyay pālā* alternates between two branches of one lineage. Their common ancestor divided his estate between two sons two generations ago. Because there are five eligible descendants (brothers) from one of these lineages, and only one from the other, the five from one branch each take a turn fulfilling the role of the Patan *Rājopādhyay* once every tenth year, whereas the single descendant of the other branch of the family takes a turn every other year.

⁶⁸Slusser states that this temple was constructed in 1637, six years after Locke suggests that the *Rājopādhyay jātrā* participation was initiated (cf. *infra* note 66).

⁶⁹This duty is allocated in the same fashion as the *sese baje* responsibility, creating a tremendous disparity in the incomes of the individuals in the two branches of the Patan *Rājopādhyay* patriline.

pulling the *rath*. The role of the *jyāpu* who actually cheers the crowd on is a relatively recent development.

After the restoration of the Shah dynasty to power in 1951, the kingdom of Nepal engaged in what has been called an experiment with democracy. A form of representative government was established at local and national levels and party politics were tolerated. It is at this time, the *Rājopādhyay* say, that their role of actually leading the *rath* pulling was usurped by young *jyāpu* farmers who have now taken charge of their peers straining at the ropes.

The *jyāpu* leader takes a precarious but highly visible position at the very front of the *rath*, thus placing himself between the *Rājopādhyays* and the crowd. Many different individuals may assume leadership over the course of the *jātrā*, and their assumption of this role involves something of a popularity contest. The pullers choose a leader from among themselves, and will readily force him from his post with ridicule if he fails to successfully coordinate their efforts. Though some individuals are famous for their skill in controlling an often unruly crowd, this role is in no way formally recognized. The royally appointed leaders, the *Rājopādhyay* priests, no longer mediate between the pullers and the god they pull.

This chapter has used a few examples of *jātrā* events and participants to illustrate some of the ways in which the *jātrā* can constitute a part of many different people's lives, and how their lives can penetrate the workings of the *jātrā*. The identity of the devotee reflects his or her involvement with Bungadya, just as his or her perception of Bungadya is a reflection of his or her own identity. The *pānjus* are the priests of Bungadya and Bungadya is one of the *pānjus*. The *Bārāhī* followed Bungadya from Kamarup and Bungadya is a member of their clan. The *Mālīni* is a female "descendant" of Lalita Jyapu who first carried Bungadya to

Nepal in a *kalāś*, and Bungadya is a woman. The Hindu *Rājopādhyay* attendants to Krishna lead the crowd in pulling the *rath* of Bungadya and Bungadya is Lord Krishna.

It is not appropriate or meaningful to ask which of these identities of Bungadya is the correct one; they all are. Chapter three demonstrated how social structural features which characterize Newar society, such as caste and *guṭhī* organizations, assume many different forms among the Newar. The same is true of the vast pantheon of gods which Newars worship and the ways in which they worship them. Though one might expect the pantheon to provide variety enough in and of itself, popular gods such as Bungadya inspire many different interpretations of who the god is and why and how the god should be honored. The diversity of these interpretations is a reflection of the diversity encompassed by Newar society and the importance of Bungadya as a powerful god.

CHAPTER IX

BUNGADYA, THE KING, AND THE STATE

According to the story which is invariably cited in explanations of the origins of the *rath jātrā*,¹ a King, assisted by a priest and a farmer, set out to bring Bungadya to Nepal in order to end a drought. Later aided by a serpent deity, the expedition becomes Newar society in microcosm par excellence; subject, king, priest, and a deity which has been "pulled" into service through *sādhana*, are united in a quest for the assistance of another god.² The roles of gods, priests, and the laity in the *rath jātrā* have already been considered. This chapter concerns the role of the king.

The myth which is recounted by the *Rājopādhyay* to account for their station in the *rath jātrā* alludes to the king's role with respect to Bungadya as well as his relationship with two other divinities, Vishnu and Taleju. The role which Bungadya plays in safe-guarding the welfare of the kingdom will be compared and contrasted with the roles of these other two deities. The role of the king in Bungadya's *jātrā* will then be considered both from an historical perspective and from the point of view of contemporary belief and practice.

The King, Vishnu, and Taleju

The *Rājopādhyays'* explanation of their status in the *jātrā*, recounted in the previous chapter, also alludes to the role of the king who ensures that the *jātrā* is carried out. Their story describes the king's relationship with Bungadya in terms

¹See the "metamyth" recounted in chapter five.

²As explained in previous chapters (see especially chapter 4), divinities penetrate nearly all aspects of Newar social interaction and are themselves reflections of the social identities of their devotees.

of the king's affinity for Krishna. Another version of this myth elaborates on this link with Krishna and points to the king's prior disrespect for Bungadya, a disrespect specifically linked to Bungadya's association with Buddhists and Buddhism. This version, summarized below, is provided by the *Rājopādhyay* originally from Bhakatpur.

In this story, the *rath* is stuck and the people entreat the king's priest (*rājguru*) to come to honor Bungadya³ so that the festival may continue. The king responds to this by saying, "That god of the *Bare* means nothing to me."⁴ Bungadya becomes angry that the king and his guru do not respect him, and states that he is also Krishna. Bungadya then appears in the Krishna temple to the *rājguru*, and Krishna appears to the *rājguru* in Bungadya's *rath*. The *rājguru* tells the king what he saw and the king then realizes that these two gods are one.

In a third version of the myth, supplied by a Buddhist *Vajrācārya* informant from Patan, the *rath* is stuck in Mahapal and the people ask the king to intervene so that the *jātrā* may proceed. The king responds by saying that he does not pay obeissance to this "red faced god."⁵ The reason that the *rath* cannot be pulled, the myth explains, is that Bungadya is angry that the king has built a temple to his *āgam dyā:*, Taleju, higher than his *rath*. When the people, still unable to pull the *rath*, again ask him to come, the King finally agrees. When he arrives at the *rath*, he is astonished to find Krishna within; upon going to the Krishna temple the King

³In the original version of this myth as told to me, the god is referred to as Matsyendranath. I have used the term Bungadya here for the sake of consistency, and because the Bungadya/Matsyendranath distinction is not the issue being examined here.

⁴"*Wa bare dyā:ta wasta ma yā.*"

⁵"*Wa hwaṃgu kwā dyā: mane mayā.*"

finds Bungadya inside. Seeing this he offers a gold banner (*patāha*) to Bungadya and the *rath* is finally pulled.⁶

These myths all share important features which illuminate the politics of divinity in Nepal. The populace depends upon the intervention of the king in order to successfully complete a halted *jātrā* and thereby please the deity who provides them rain. The *jātrā* is halted due to disrespect shown to Bungadya, either as compared to the status of Krishna or, in the Buddhist recension, Taleju, both of the latter deities having especially intimate relationships with the king. The lower esteem granted Bungadya is due, in part, to his identity as a Buddhist god. The king and/or his priestly counterpart, the *rājguru*, come to recognize Krishna and Bungadya as equivalent, or that Bungadya encompasses Krishna. Having recognized the true status of Bungadya, the king honors him, order is restored, and the *jātrā* resumes.

Before proceeding further in delineating the links between the king, Bungadya, and the *jātrā*, let us briefly consider the two other gods mentioned in these myths, Krishna and Taleju. Siddhinarsimha Malla, who built the Krishna temple in which Bungadya appears in these myths, is said to have originally intended to devote the temple to Shiva. The king purportedly changed his mind when Krishna came to

⁶Wright's chronicle (1972:242) relates another myth based on the same theme as follows; "In N.S. 776, early in the morning of the 15th of Phagun Badi (February-March, A.D. 1557), the *gajura* of the temple of Bug-devata in Tava-bahal was struck by lightning, and the flag fell down. This year, during the *rath jatra* of Bug-devata, at the time when the rath reached the cross roads at Mahapal, a child, whose *pashni* (first rice feeding) had just taken place, came and sat on the *rath*, and the devata taking possession of him, he spoke thus, "Come, Raja Siddhi-Narshinha! I am not at all pleased at thy building this high temple!" [to Taleju, which the king had built the year before in contravention of the tradition that no building be built higher than Bungadya's *rath*] Siddhi-Narsinha, however, did not come, and the devata disappeared, exclaiming, "I will never come to speak any more."

him in a dream and, telling him of an image of Krishna which was buried nearby, instructed the king to place this image in the temple in Shiva's stead.⁷ Krishna is the most popular avatar of Vishnu in the Kathmandu valley, and this temple is the most famous of those dedicated to him.

The close association between the king and Vishnu was well established by the fourteenth century when Sthithimalla (reigned 1382-1395)⁸ declared himself an incarnation⁹ of Vishnu (Slusser 1982:67), an identification of the King which persists today. Evidence of this tie with Vishnu is to be found in images of Vishnu or his vehicle, Garuda, in which the face of the god is a portrait of the king who commissioned the image (Slusser 1982, vol.II:fig. 65, Toffin 1986:76).¹⁰ It is also to be found in current belief, for it is said that the king may never go to see the Jalasayana Narayana (Vishnu) at Budhanilkantha, for to see himself in this

⁷. Some say that in fact a *Śiva liṅga* is depicted on the tympanum or *torana* located above the door of the main sanctum where Krishna presides.

⁸Slusser 1982: appendix, table III-3.

⁹The term actually used is *aṁśavātara* (Skt.), or lesser *avatār*.

¹⁰There is no contradiction, it would appear, in being identified both as an *aṁśavātār* of a god and his servant. None of the images described in these references incorporate royal portraits in both the *vāhana* (vehicle) and god portrayed. As Toffin notes, the portrait noted by Slusser is exceptional, but the same kings who were commissioning *garudas* which feature their royal portraits were declaring themselves to be *avatārs* of Vishnu.

slumbering form would cause him to enter the sleep of death.¹¹ This tradition anticipates a theme which will be expanded upon later with respect to Bungadya, that proximity to the divine not only involves exceptional empowerment, but entails vulnerability as well.

Toffin (1986:73) has likened the status of Vishnu in the Kingdom of Nepal with that of Pasupati, both of which he labels "dieux d'état," or *raṣṭra* (national) *dyā:*, protectors of the country. The king's worship of these gods is mediated by a Brahmin priest, whose status is actually superior to that of the king, as indicated by the traditional six "Śrī"s which precede the *rājaguru*'s name as compared to the king's five. The king's relationship with these gods, according to Toffin, conforms to that upon which Dumont's notion of caste society is based: the complete dissociation of power and status (Dumont 1980:215).¹²

The position of the king with respect to Taleju is qualitatively different from the relationship which links the king with Vishnu. His worship of the goddess Taleju is not mediated by a Brahmin, but a *Śreṣṭhacārya*, to the extent that his

¹¹Slusser (1982:242) describes this form of Vishnu as that which he assumes "... after each cyclical destruction of the universe [when he] drowns for untold eons in the infinite water reaches. The recumbent deity is supported on the immense coils of the polycephalous serpent Ananta (Endiess), or Sesa (Remainder), a divine being who symbolizes the waters remaining after the cosmic ocean, in the endless cycle, is again transmuted into life." Only this image, considered especially powerful because it was "found" rather than made, constitutes a threat to the king, who, according to tradition, has a facsimile within his palace compound.

¹²The contradiction inherent in a priest's privilege (i.e. power) being based on his dissociation from privilege has been noted by Dumont (1980:77) and his critics (see Heesterman 1971, Greenwold 1975), and will be discussed further below.

worship of either is mediated at all.¹³ Toffin has made the distinction between Vishnu's role as *raṣṭradīyā*: and Taleju's role as the tutelary divinity of the king as follows;

... Vishnu et Paśupati sont des dieux d'Etat, *rāṣṭradevatā* (ou *rāṣṭriyadevatā*), végétariens et appartenant au plus haut niveau du panthéon; Taleju est une divinité tutélaire, individuelle autant qu'héritaire, elle appartient à la catégorie des *āgam dya* ou les *īṣṭadevatā*, elle accepte les sacrifices sanglants. (1986:73-74)¹⁴

We have noted the annual presence of the Kumari, the living incarnation of Taleju, in the *rath jātrā*, and mentioned the tradition that Prithvinarayan Shah, upon conquering Kathmandu, accepted a *tika* from her as part of the on-going Indra jatra celebration. The story of the origins of the Kumari reveals something of the intimacy and unmediated contact which the king is considered to have with this goddess.¹⁵

It is said that Taleju had the habit of visiting the king in his palace every day. The goddess gave his advice concerning the manner of governing the kingdom and, together, they played dice. One day, the queen (certain versions say the sister of the king, others, his daughter) sees the goddess in her husband's room. Taleju became so outraged that she decided to never again set foot in the palace. She then ordered the king to inaugurate a large celebration in her honor and promised him that she would manifest herself to him in

¹³Brahmins are the priests of temples devoted to Vishnu and his *avatārs*. The notion that the king's relationship with this god is mediated entirely by these Brahmins, however, is difficult to maintain in the light of the tradition of direct contact which the king is said to have had in his dreams and the apparitions of Krishna in Bungadya's *rath*, not to mention the king's identity as an *aṃśavatār* of Vishnu.

¹⁴I would disagree with Toffin if he intends to suggest that *īṣṭadevatā* necessarily accept blood sacrifice. *īṣṭa devatās*, referred to in Newari as *iccha dīyā:s*, are gods chosen (*iccha* = "desired") for special devotion, and include gods such as Bungadya who abhor sacrifice.

¹⁵The 1975 study by Michael Allen remains the best source on the subject of the Kumaris in the Kathmandu valley.

the form of a little virgin of the Śākya caste. (Toffin 1986:88, my translation)

To translate the name of this game, called *tharki*, or *tripāsā*, as "playing dice" ("jouaient aux dès"), though dice are used in the game, impoverishes the meaning of this story.¹⁶ This game, in which cowrie shells or other objects are moved about on a checkered cloth, is associated with marriage. Shiva and Parvati are said to have played *tharki*, and those who are to get married also traditionally play this game.¹⁷

As Toffin notes, Taleju and the king are here portrayed as a couple (1986:88). He further suggests that "... le roi éprouve le secret désir de la posséder. Parfois elle fait figure de compagne à part entière du souverain, et ce dernier est censé tirer son pouvoir de la *śakti*, pouvoir féminin de la déesse." (1986:88) To speculate on the motives of the king in this myth demands a leap of faith which is, perhaps, more prudent not to take. However, it is clear that the goddess Taleju confers power upon the king through his unmediated relationship with her. His capacity to engage her directly is passed from the king to his successor in the form of a *mantra*, which the king traditionally reveals to his heir just before dying or abdicating the throne (Toffin 1986:88). Toffin offers this evidence as a challenge to Dumont's vision of the caste system, suggesting that tantric polity in Nepal involves two forms of royal communication with divinity. The *raṣṭradīyā*: and king, according to Toffin, are related as Dumont would predict, through the mediation of the Brahmin. The relationship between the royal *āgam*

¹⁶In the version which Toffin supplies in an earlier article (1979:60) he provides the original term, *tripāsā*.

¹⁷See Slusser 1982, vol.II:figs.90, 91, and Joshi 1988:261 concerning this game.

dyā: and the king, however, does not fit the model. He further suggests that the opposition between the categories of *āgam dyā:* and *raṣṭradyā:* is not clear cut, citing evidence of attempts on the part of kings to establish direct links between their palaces and the temples of *raṣṭradyā:s* (1986:90). Evidence concerning Bungadya and his *rath jātrā* more convincingly suggests that the Dumontian model is not only problematic with respect to the king's relationship with his *āgam dyā:*, but with respect to the king's relationship with the *raṣṭradyā:s* as well.

Bungadya as Nepal's Guardian

One of the conditions which Bungadya's mother is said to have demanded of Narendradeva upon surrendering her son was that Bungadya become the *raṣṭradyā:* of Nepal. The myths surrounding the role of the *Rājopādhyay* suggest that this status was not recognized by a Malla king in the seventeenth century, provoking Bungadya to protest by refusing to go on with his annual *jātrā*. In these stories, the situation is resolved when Bungadya is accorded a status equivalent to Krishna (another *raṣṭradyā:*'s *avatār*), or in another rescension, assuaged after having been slighted by the king's expression of devotion to Taleju. Numerous writers, foreign and Nepalese alike, have equated the importance of Bungadya with that of Pasupati, arguably the most important of Nepal's *raṣṭradyā:s* from the perspective of the general population of the country.¹⁸ It is clear that posterity has honored Narendradeva's promise, for Bungadya ranks among the three protectors of Nepal recognized as *raṣṭradyā:s*, or *raṣṭriya devatas*, as they would be described by Nepali-speaking devotees.

¹⁸See Chapter 5, introduction.

The King and the Jatra

The mythological role of the king in the *jātrā* has already been noted, as have numerous occasions in which the king is present either in the person of his descendant, or in the form of his ceremonial sword (see appendix).¹⁹ During the bathing ceremony, a long corridor of space between the king's sword and the bathing platform is kept clear so that the king may "see" the bathing. The *pānjus* bring *prasād* from the secret funerary rituals which follow the bathing directly to the king on the morning of the following day. Srinivasa Malla (reigned 1619-1691) established the *guṭhī* for the performance of the annual *cakra puṇjā* offered by the Kanphata yogis at Ta Baha on the day the god is put in the *rath*, and a representative from the palace of the current king accompanies the Kanphata yogis wherever they perform these rites. Numerous other *guṭhīs* have been established by kings through the history of the *jātrā* to support such institutions as the *āratī puṇjās*, the maintenance of a silver *patāha* and other ornaments donated by various kings, and the bathing ceremony (see Locke 1980:306-15 passim). The king is represented by proxy every time Bungadya is moved, and often at sacrificial offerings made during the *jātrā*. Not only are his Malla predecessors present in the form of the ceremonial sword, but the *guruṇjya paltan*, representing the *rājguru*, is also symbolic of the current king's presence.

The climax of the *jātrā*, *bhoto kenegu*, involves the king himself. One cannot help but be impressed that in these politically restive times in Nepal the King exposes himself to great risk in publicly paying his respects at *bhoto kenegu*.

¹⁹This sword is clearly representative of not only the king's presence, but his power. Toffin (1986:85) notes that this sword is always kept within the palace Taleju temple. Though I have not been able to verify this as current practice, it may account for the fact that the sword procession always assembles in the Patan palace courtyard adjacent to the Taleju temple.

These concluding ceremonies take place in a large open lawn (Jawalakhel) surrounded by thousands of spectators. The truckloads of fully armed infantry which surround the area before the ceremony and the unusually impressive police presence bear powerful testimony to the risks which are presumed to exist.

Indra *jātrā* is the only other annual festival devoted to a god in which the king plays a prominent public part, Indra *jātrā* being the festival which was inaugurated by the king in honor of Taleju, his *āgam dyā*.²⁰ Finally, one of the most significant aspects of the king's involvement in the *jātrā* is that the greatest expenditures during the *jātrā* are born by the *Guthī Samsthan*, an organization which is answerable only to the palace.

This involvement of the king in the *jātrā* compels one to consider why the king so extensively patronizes and directly participates in this particular festival. His role in the *jātrā* is popularly conceived as having clear historical origins, and his participation is considered an obligation of his office. As an inscription placed in Ta Baha by Srinivasa Malla in 1673 states, "Not even the king can excuse himself from his duties toward the deity." (Locke 1980:310) The king's participation in such a popular festival is certainly politically advantageous in terms of its capacity to assert royal status and prerogative as well as demonstrating sympathy with the devotion of his subjects. In addition to these considerations, however, is another. Though the *jātrā* has the capacity to symbolize Bungadya's favor upon the king and the subjects of the state which he and the king are charged with

²⁰Once every twelve years the King plays a prominent role in the *Samyek* festival at Swayambhu. He also appears at a festival known as *ghode jātrā*, or "horse festival", which has become a military revue and opportunity to demonstrate Nepal's latest weapons technology.

protecting, it also has the very real capacity to express precisely the opposite. In fact, the very nature of the *rath jātrā* invites disaster.

The Jatra and Disaster

The risk of calamity is a salient feature of the *rath jātrā*. The towering structure of the *rath* is both massive and precarious, perched on a small wheel-base and assembled essentially without any structural metal parts.²¹ The unusual structure of the *rath*, combined with the difficulty of pulling it along the narrow twisting route of the *jātrā*, make it likely that some accident will occur. *jātrā* mishaps, occasionally dramatic and threatening to life and property, are subjects of great fascination for the Newar. Many participants in the *jātrā*, including priests, display collections of photographs of *rath jātrā* disasters on their walls. Photo studios display and sell prints of ruined *raths*. The likelihood of disaster occurring during the *rath jātrā* of Bungadya makes it unique among the many chariot processions performed in South Asia.²²

The *jātrās* of the other two *Lokeśwars* who also have *rath jātrās* in the Kathmandu valley (Cakwadya and Janmadya), use vehicles which are far smaller than Bungadya's and rarely cause significant destruction or suffer damage. Formerly the *rath* used in Dolakha may have also posed risks similar to those posed by the *rath* of Bungadya, though in 1983 this *jātrā* was performed on a

²¹The only important exceptions to this rule are the steel axles and some steel cables which have recently been introduced in spite of considerable controversy over the appropriateness of their use in the *rath*.

²²Pieper and Thomsen (1980:10) note that "The frequent allusions to chariot architecture in inscriptions often use metaphors of hugeness and *stability*, like that of the mythical Mandara mountain which the gods used for churning the cosmic ocean" (emphasis added).

scale significantly smaller than is reported to have been customary in the past. The "Buga dya" and his festival in Dolakha, located approximately sixty kilometers outside the valley, are clearly duplications of Bungadya and his festival in Patan.

Though stories of self-immolation during the festival of Jagannath in Orissa seized the British imagination, giving us the word "juggernaut," there is considerable doubt that people deliberately laid themselves in front of its wheels to the extent that legend suggests (Kulke 1980:19). This sort of destruction, whether common during the Jagannath *jātrā* or not, is quite different from the unintentional destruction wrought during the *jātrā* of Bungadya. The Jagannath festival chariots, though massive, are quite stable. Their wheel bases, which have many wheels, are nearly as broad as the superstructures which they support are high, and the upper portions of these *raths* are light framework structures covered with cloth.²³ These *raths* are unlikely to suffer destruction or cause unintentional destruction to property in the manner for which Bungadya's *rath* is famous. The *raths* of Jagannath, Subhadra, and Balaram are customarily pulled quite slowly in a stately fashion in their Orissan *jātrā*, in marked contrast with the chaotic rush in which Bungadya's *rath* is frequently pulled (Mishra 1984:131-32).

An extremely important feature of Bungadya's *jātrā* is the general belief that if it goes awry, it forbodes catastrophe for the king and his kingdom. Beliefs concerning the implications of the *rath jātrā*'s success or failure are clearly suggested in the historical record, and constitute a recurrent theme in the chronicles which mention the *rath jātrā*. The list of citations concerning Bungadya collected by Father Locke include a litany of reports of *rath jātrā* disasters and the

²³"Jagannatha's car, "*Nandighosa*," stands 45 feet high and is supported on 16 wheels each with a diameter of 7 feet..." (Mishra 1984:132).

repercussions they had on the royal family. The following examples serve to illustrate this theme which dominates many historical accounts of the *jātrā* and is a popular subject of conversation concerning *jātrās* of the past.

In this year (1662) since the Queen of Pratap Malla of Kathmandu had died, the festival of Matsyendranath was held without musical instruments. A great wind blew down many trees and took the roofs off of houses. The prince, Chatranarasimha Malla died and there were later fires all over the city. The king came to the conclusion that the reason for all of these disasters was that the instruments had not been played during the festival, so he went to Taudah (the pond south of Cobhar known as the abode of Karkotaka Naga rajah) to recite prayers on the day of the solar eclipse ("Rajbhogmala," Ancient Nepal, 10:3; Bhasa Vamsavali Part Two, p. 65, as cited by Locke 1980:306).

In 1705, when the "jatra was filled with ill omens" including the main beam (*dhwamā*) breaking repeatedly and rituals being performed at other than the proper times, King Yoganendra [ruled Patan 1684-1705] died before the conclusion of the jatra. In 1717 the main beam broke 31 times, the *rath* of Cakwadya burned, and a plague broke out in the city. King Riddhinarasimha [reigned 1715-1717] died shortly after these disasters (Locke 1980:306-318 *passim*).

Sources from the middle of the seventeenth to the latter half of the nineteenth century recount five royal deaths which occur in conjunction with inauspicious *rath jātrās*,²⁴ and two other deaths of kings which occur in conjunction

²⁴Prince Chatranasimha Malla, 1662; Yognarendra, 1705; Riddhinarsimha Deva, 1717; Kings Surendra and Rajendra, 1875.

with ill-omens related to Bungadya.²⁵ A majority of the accounts which describe problematic *rath jātrās* during this period mention either a concurrent death in the royal family (most often of the king himself) or the King attempting to avert calamity by directly intervening in the *jātrā*. According to these accounts the King would intervene by personally making a generous offering to Bungadya or by accompanying the *rath* procession in person. Though the rulers of Nepal have long been important patrons of the cult of Matsyendranath, their actual participation in the procession prior to the Rana period was apparently an exceptional occurrence limited to particularly problematic *jātrās* or twelve-year *jātrās* which originated in Bungamati.²⁶

This traditional belief which links the success of the *jātrā* with the welfare of the King and Kingdom has extended beyond the period of Malla rule, which ended in 1769, through several major political transformations. The sudden deaths of the

²⁵793 N.S. (1672) During the bright half of the month of Paus, twenty days before the death of the king of Bhaktapur, Bungadeva cried." (Aitihasik Ghatanavali, p. 5., as cited by Locke 1980:308) "880 N.S. (1760) In this year Visvajit Malla, the king of Patan, paid a visit to Machendranath. When he got to the temple he noticed that the god had his back turned to him. He inquired why the image had been turned round, but everyone else said that it was not turned round. The king took this as an ill omen. Later that night as he sat by the palace window, the son of the Kaji of Caku Baha ... threw a rock at him. The king had taken this man's wife into the palace as a mistress. Men were sent off in pursuit to capture the man. A riot ensued and two of the Kaji's sons descended on the palace. Rather than fall into the hands of the mob, Visvajit took his own life." ("Rajbhogmala," Ancient Nepal, 10:11, as cited by Locke 1980:321)

²⁶This conclusion is based on the fact that of the 92 references which Locke cites between A.D. 879 and 1850, only four note that the king actually accompanied the procession of the *rath*. In all four of these cases, ill omens or disasters occurred during the *jātrā*, and all four were twelve year *jātrās* originating from Bungamati which the king traditionally accompanies.

Shah dynasty Kings Surendra and Rajendra are connected in the chronicles with *rath jātrā* disasters.

This year (1875) the *ratha* broke in two near Patan Darbar [palace of the Newar Patan Kings]. A new *ratha* was made, the deity put back on the *ratha* and the *jātrā* continued. Then suddenly King Surendra died and the festivities were held up for thirteen days. Again while the *ratha* was in Lagankhel King Rajendra died and the festivities were held up for another thirteen days."(Locke 1980:323)

In 1846 the Shah King was effectively relegated to the status of figurehead and prisoner in his own palace by the Prime Minister, Jang Bahadur Rana.²⁷ This began more than a century of Rana rule, during which time the Prime Ministership became a hereditary position of autocratic authority. The Rana Prime Ministers kept close watch over the *rath jātrās* during this period and, according to those who served under them, were exceptionally harsh on those whom they considered lax in fulfilling their traditional *jātrā* obligations. The Ranas contributed conspicuously to the pageantry of the *jātrā*, Jang Bahadur Rana donating some of the most lavish and prominent decorations used in both the Patan and Kathmandu *rath jātrās* for Bungadya and Janmadya.

Rana participation in the *jātrā* was exceptionally direct and public. It is with Oldfield's account from 1848 that we begin to see the participation of the Rana Prime Minister and the King consistently noted in accounts of the *jātrā*, including *jātrās* other than the twelve-year *jātrās* which originate in Bungamati. Though the custom of important figures of state accompanying the *jātrā* on elephants seems to have died out by the time Percival Landon observed the *jātrā* in 1924 (Locke

²⁷ Jang Bahdur's maternal relative, Bhimsen Thapa, with his father the Prime Minister, had also achieved unprecedented power during Bhimsen Thapa's tenure as Mukhtiyar General from 1806-1837. This was due, in part, to the succession of two child-kings during this period as well as favors granted by the Queen (Shaha 1982:38).

1980:325), on at least one occasion near the end of the Rana rule, the Prime Minister took a place of prominence in the *jātrā* proceedings. Juddha Shamsheer, the Rana Prime Minister who ruled from 1932 to 1945, personally exhibited the *bhoto* of Bungadya at the concluding ceremony of the *rath jātrā*, a task normally performed by a lower level functionary.²⁸

The security of this treasure, a jewelled shirt which is protected by Bungadya, is traditionally related to the welfare of the kingdom. Juddha Shamsheer's extraordinary participation in the *bhotokenegu* ceremony (notably, in the presence of the king), along with other evidence of the Rana's acute concern regarding the *jātrā*,²⁹ suggest, at the very least, that the Ranas went to great lengths to accommodate the tradition which links the progress of the *jātrā* with the welfare of the state and its rulers. The Ranas' active participation in this festival was consistent with their need to legitimize and protect their ill-gotten status as the rulers of Nepal, particularly among the Newar who were especially resentful of the Rana regime in its later years.³⁰ Though an absence of accounts of such public participation in the *jātrā* by the Kings prior to the reign of the Ranas is not

²⁸This information was provided by a former *Guthī Samsthan* official who was a witness, and confirmed by a photograph (located in a private collection in Kathmandu) of Juddha Shamsheer showing the *bhoto* at *bhotokenegu*.

²⁹ Among the evidence referred to here are accounts of *guthī samsthan* officials who were responsible for the *jātrā* under Rana rule. Other informants recall the frequent presence of the Rana prime ministers in the *jātrā* procession; a practice engaged in less frequently by their predecessors and never, to my knowledge, by their successors.

³⁰The intensive Rana participation in the Jatra bears a striking similarity with the extravagance with which Purosottma, the illegitimate usurper of the Orissan throne in the fifteenth century, honored Jagannath with gifts and assumed the responsibility of sweeping out the chariots before the Jagannath *jātrā* begins (Kulke 1980:22).

conclusive evidence that it did not occur, it is striking that out of nearly 100 references to Bungadya noted by Locke from A.D. 879 to the Rana period,³¹ only four noted the participation of the king in the procession (Locke 1980:299-325). In each of these cases it was noted during a twelve year *jātrā*, not only an especially auspicious occasion which the king traditionally attends, but a particularly dangerous one as well, for *jātrā* mishaps are far more likely to occur on the long and arduous route from Bungamati.³² During the Rana period, however, it is clear that the Prime Minister and other heads of state were often conspicuously present in the procession.

Jatra Disasters and Current Belief

The beliefs concerning the implications of the *rath jātrā*'s success or failure which are suggested in the historical record persist today. When asked what the implications are for someone whose house is damaged by the *rath*, informants emphatically state that this does not reflect negatively on the houseowner, but rather on the King. On the one occasion during my field work when the *rath*'s central beam, or *dhwamā*, broke, I overheard people in the crowd wondering aloud what would become of the country and what would become of the king.

³¹Many other names are actually used in these references to the god which I have, for the sake of clarity, consistently referred to as Bungadya.

³²In each one of these cases in 1681, 1693, 1705, and 1717, disasters occurred over the course of the *jātrā* (Locke 1980:314, 315, 316-17, 318). Two other cases in which the king's presence during the *jātrā* is noted mention that the king went to Bungamati to see the festival. This is noted in the year 1313 and 1387, neither of which years fall into the twelve year cycle into which the four *jātrās* noted above were a part, nor are they any multiple of twelve years apart from each other. This may indicate that sometime after 1313 the annual *jātrā* from Bungamati was discontinued, or that this source is referring to some other *jātrā*, or that both dates are in error.

This speculation was unsolicited and spontaneous, directed at no one in particular, and uttered in apparent dismay. A research assistant reported hearing similar concerns being voiced by the crowd earlier that same year when one of the *rath*'s wheels broke in U Baha. These instances of spontaneous speculation, unmotivated by any questions posed by me or anyone else, is convincing evidence of genuine belief.³³

Hindu Polity, Buddhist Priests, and Tantrism

The identity of Bungadya as a *raṣṭradīyā*: has been firmly established. The extensive patronage offered by kings over the centuries, their participation in the *jātrā*, and the link between the welfare of the kingdom and the *rath jātrā* all attest to this. But with Bungadya we are compelled to reconsider the distinction between *raṣṭradīyā*: and *āgam dyā*: proposed by Toffin, for it becomes even more blurred than Toffin acknowledges. The fate of the *jātrā* is linked with that of the kingdom as if by virtue of the kingdom being an extension of the king. The king suffers most directly from any misfortune connected with the *jātrā*. The king is not only an "instrument of the god" as Toffin suggests, but bound to the god by a shared fate.

According to tradition, Narendradeva merged with Bungadya's left foot after dying in despair, having unwittingly killed the priest through whose tantric powers he was able to bring Bungadya to Nepal to save his kingdom. The incident which led both Narendradeva and his priest, Bandhudatta, to merge into the feet of

³³This belief was confirmed by comments made by people to whom I showed pictures of past *jātrā* disasters. Similar comments were overheard in the crowd during the Indra Jatra of 1983 when the *gajur* atop Kumari's chariot was temporarily lost, Kumari being linked to the king as his *āgam dyā*:.

Bungadya was a result of Bandhudatta requiring the assistance of the slumbering king in order to capture the god. Toffin has suggested with respect to the story which relates this incident that "Toute se passe comme si le couple prêtre bouddhiste/roi remplaçait ici le couple brâhmane/roi du royaume hindou classique." (1979:68) But, in fact, both this story and current beliefs and practices suggest something different. The king's devotion to Bungadya, in so far as it is mediated by priests, is mediated by the Buddhist *pānjus*. It is the *pānjus* who preside over the protective sacrifices at which the king, as *jajman*, plays the role of sacrificer. It is also they who bring the king *prasād* from the secret rites which follow the annual bathing and who prepare the *prasād* which the king receives at *bhotokenegu*. Though the *pānjus* may be in a state of relative purity while performing these rites,³⁴ they cannot claim the status of purity which the Brahmin preserves throughout his life, for they consume meat and drink alcohol. They are therefore closer to the status of the king than the Brahmin, and the oppositions between pure and impure, status and power, priest and king, are weakened.³⁵

The priest and the king share a similar intimacy with the god in the myth of his coming to the valley. They are mutually dependent upon one another to secure the deity for the sake of the kingdom. They ultimately assume nearly identical proximity with the deity, "residing" in his feet, though, in accordance with his traditionally acknowledged superiority, the priest resides in the right foot and the king in the left. The descendant of the Malla king or his proxy wears the "feet"

³⁴*Pānjus* must fast before performing many of these rites.

³⁵It should also be recalled that the power of divine coercion is at the heart of *sādhana*, upon which much Vajrayana ritual is based.

of Bungadya on his head in processions not only as a symbol of servitude, but as an emblem of his privileged proximity to the god.

The *rath jātrā* is, in one sense, analogous to the annual ceremony at the climax of Indra jatra in which the Kumari (Taleju incarnate) bestows a *tika* upon the king. At this point, the Kumari publicly reaffirms her private relationship with the king. This relationship empowers him through his unmediated contact with Taleju which he accomplishes through secret tantric ritual (cf. Toffin 1979:61). Bungadya's *rath jātrā* confirms the very public relationship of intimacy between Bungadya and the king. However, the *jātrā* does not simply serve to "... recreate the universe and restore the cosmic order..."³⁶ as Toffin suggests, for the *rath jātrā* serves to reveal chaos and order equally effectively. The many protective rites of the *jātrā* demonstrate that proximity to divinity not only empowers, but renders one vulnerable as well. This is nowhere more evident than in the traditions which link the fate of the *jātrā* with that of the king. The design of the *rath* and the route it must follow present numerous opportunities for disaster. The successful *jātrā* is therefore as telling as the disastrous *jātrā*. The *jātrā* renders the true nature of the relationship between the king and Bungadya, whether it is favorable or not, open to public view.

As noted previously, the *jātrā* is as much a time of conflict as it is a time of solidarity. Among the Newar, who share numerous ways of differentiating themselves from one another through different kinds of group affiliation, "communitas" and conflict are two sides of the same coin. Though it may be that thousands of people simultaneously experience "communitas" at certain points of the *jātrā*, it is unlikely that it is one "communitas" that they share. The "anti-

³⁶Toffin 1979:75, my translation.

structural" relationships which are characteristic of *communitas*, as defined by Turner, are in polar opposition to relations constrained by structure "... or all that holds people apart, defines their differences, and constrains their actions" (Turner 1974:274). To the extent that such structure is set aside during the *jātrā*, it is set aside within larger structural boundaries, thereby stressing the boundaries within which *communitas* may be experienced.³⁷

Rivalries between neighborhoods and between some clans who work on the *rath* have already been noted as conspicuous aspects of the *jātrā*. Hidden from public view are many secret communal feasts which stress the exclusive aspect of association. The secrecy of these feasts seems to be preserved, in part, for the sake of maintaining an external facade of internal solidarity. I was often told that one of the reasons that outsiders were excluded from secret feasts was that those who participated often fought with one another.³⁸

The *jātrā* is a time in which either chaos or order can prevail. This holds true with respect to the relationship between the king and Bungadya as well as relations among fellow *guthīyars* who celebrate Bungadya's festival. Toffin is inadvertently correct when he states that *jātrās* restore cosmic order, for the realm of gods is as fraught with conflict as the realm of humans, if these realms can be

³⁷Turner, citing Hume's concept of "... the egalitarian 'sentiment of humanity'.... representing the desire for a total immediate relationship between person and person, a relationship which nevertheless does not submerge one in the other but safeguards their uniqueness in the very act of realizing their commonness" (1974:274), acknowledges in another way that factionalism and solidarity are inextricably linked.

³⁸It was not unusual for an informant to include among the list of customary *guthī* activities connected with the *jātrā* the fighting that traditionally occurs during their secret feasts. One informant explicitly said "... and you must write that down too!" when he told me of the fractious nature of these exclusive feasts.

meaningfully distinguished at all. Viewed from the perspective of the role of the king, the *jātrā* once again exemplifies the difficulty of distinguishing the realm of gods from the realm of humans, the sacred from the secular, the prerogatives of status from those of power. The efforts of royal subjects who build and pull a god's chariot serve to reveal the fate of their king. The position of a king with respect to both his subjects and Bungadya, a guardian of his country, is revealed in Bungadya's *rath jātrā*.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION:

THE FESTIVAL OF BUNGADYA AND THE POLITICS OF DIVINITY

The description and analysis of the *jātrā* contained in the foregoing pages expands and amends earlier ethnography on the Newar, particularly that concerning one of their most important deities, Bungadya. The *jātrā* of Bungadya has been examined within the sphere of the many divinities which it engages, as well as from the perspectives of the numerous different groups and individuals who participate in it. By focussing on the many different ways in which people are involved in the *jātrā* and the worship of Bungadya, this examination of the *rath jātrā* also serves to illustrate themes discussed in the general introductory sections on Newar society and religion. The importance of the Newar ethnography, however, extends beyond the study of Newars, Nepal, or South Asia, for the Newar ethnographic material poses significant methodological and theoretical challenges for the anthropologist which are not limited to any particular geographic area.

This chapter has two objectives. The first is to situate within the larger context of Newar culture the prevalent themes which emerged from the analysis of the *jātrā*. Many of the more striking and apparently distinctive aspects of the *jātrā*, such as the bloody *māha bali* sacrifices offered in the presence of the compassionate Bungadya, have been shown to be manifestations of basic principles which are expressed in other ways in the context of the *jātrā*. This chapter will draw on comparative material to illustrate that these principles are also manifested in similar ways in other Newar practices which occur outside the *jātrā*. It will be shown that the *jātrā*, when considered from the point of view of the principles which underlie it, does not constitute an exceptional departure from the

norms of Newar belief and practice, but serves to bring structural features of Newar culture into bold relief.¹

The second objective of this chapter is to demonstrate that this analysis of Newar culture and society is pertinent to several other fields of inquiry in South Asia and beyond. The most obvious aspect of this study which is relevant to broader issues is its concern with religion. Prevalent notions concerning Buddhism are challenged if we are to accept that Newar Buddhists, for whom caste is an essential part of social identity and who frequently offer sacrifice are, in fact, Buddhists. The difficulty of distinguishing the sacred from that which is not is particularly acute among the Newar, though not unique to them. The notion that the "sacred" and the "secular" constitute two distinct realms is prevalent in the literature, and often used without explicit justification. The problem of discussing religion as a realm apart from society in the South Asian context has often been noted, but the Newar material makes it difficult to make a distinction between religion and society on even a provisional basis. Furthermore, the role of the king in the *jātrā* points to larger issues concerning Hindu polity which, in turn, have a bearing on theories concerning caste.

Perhaps the greatest challenge which the Newar material presents is the diversity of perspectives and practices which Newar society encompasses. Any familiarity with this diversity among the Newar compels one to carefully consider what one means by "belief system." Though the Newar may be exceptional with respect to the degree that they hold divergent beliefs concerning important gods

¹This might seem obvious, but some account for what they perceive as "abberations" (such as sacrifice) which occur during the *jātrā* by noting the *jātrā*'s wide popularity and the unusual susceptibility to "outside" (i.e. Hindu) influence which such popularity is presumed to entail. This chapter will serve to refute this argument.

and rituals, they are not exceptional with respect to the mere coexistence of diverse beliefs and multiple interpretations within their culture. Even the most undifferentiated societies (with respect to status and/or power, whatever they may entail) include adults and children, men and women, the influential and the ignored. Diversity of belief should be presumed to exist in any society and sought out rather than ignored or regarded as the product of deviance or ignorance. It is imperative to understand *who* it is that believes *what* and *when* in order to accurately portray beliefs as part of a system based on fundamental principles. This imperative poses methodological as well as theoretical problems for the anthropologist who is all-too accustomed to making sweeping statements about what a given "people" believe without taking into consideration the differences among them.

In this dissertation, the diversity of beliefs and practices which pertain to one festival have been related to the power entailed in having access to the divine. The principal of divine proximity entailing empowerment is emphasized among the Newar, but is quite familiar to any student of religion irrespective of context. Celebrations of divine presence or power, such as processions of gods, have the potential to serve as a medium of demonstrating ideas about status and power which are shared, as well as ideas which are points of contention. Any serious attempt to understand a public festival or ritual, no matter how ancient in origin, should not rest on the assumption that it necessarily serves to maintain the status quo. The vast majority of those who have examined festivals in the Indian sub-continent, even those festivals in which conflict and change is evident, have

stressed the role of these festivals in re-affirming the legitimacy of societal order (i.e. the status quo).²

The popular objections to using metal parts in building Bungadya's *rath* and employing cranes to pull it spring from the fact that these innovations minimize the chance of catastrophe, thereby also diminishing the potential significance of there being no catastrophe at all.³ The preservation of traditions within the *rath jātrā* make it an effective medium in which to reveal change. The relatively new tradition of a *jyāpu* leading the *rath* pullers from the very front of the *rath* is significant by virtue of the presence of the *Rājopādhyay* priests behind him. The presence of the *Rājopādhyay* priests is also meaningful by virtue of the fact that they were not always there in the past. To say that something is "traditional," therefore, is essentially meaningless. One has to ask, "traditional" as of when and for whom? As noted above, change and "tradition" are not necessarily opposed, change being very much a part of the tradition of the *rath jātrā*.

The Festival as a Subject of Analysis

The suggestion that the *jātrā* serves as a medium of expression is not intended to set the *jātrā* apart from society. The fact that the *jātrā* changes over time is a reflection of the fact that it does not exist as a separate entity, requiring deliberate modification in order to maintain symbolic currency, but that it undergoes

²See Hanchett (1972), Gutschow (1980), Inden (1981), Richards (1981), Beals (1964), and Toffin (1979).

³During the *jātrās* of 1983 and 1984, a large crane was kept nearby and ready to assist in the event the *rath* got stuck or broke down, and was employed on several occasions. This was resented by many people who commented upon the detrimental effect this had on the *jātrā*. The *guthī samsthan* officials justified the use of the crane on the basis of the fact that the *rath* was extremely costly.

change in the same manner as other social institutions. Three chapters of this dissertation are devoted to describing how the activities of the *jātrā* engage individuals and groups, and how individuals and groups define themselves with respect to the *jātrā* and the god it honors. Two additional simple points may be made to illustrate the difficulty in establishing a boundary between the *jātrā* and the realities of day to day life among the Newar. The *rath jātrā* of Bungadya is one among hundreds of festivals which occur every year in the Kathmandu valley. Festivals are an integral part of the Newar way of life. Bungadya's *rath jātrā* is the biggest of them all, and may last for nearly half of the year. It cannot very well be described as an exceptional event, or period of "liminality" outside of the structure of the ordinary,⁴ if it occupies such a significant portion of the year for so many people.

Akos Östor, in introducing his study of a festival in the small Bengali town of Vishnupur, has discussed the status of the festival from the perspective of the participant as well as from the analytic perspective of the anthropologist.

My argument is that festivals are a legitimate form of analysis. I am concerned with the actors in the ritual process, how they orient themselves to the ritual as object, activity, symbol, and so on. In those moments the actor faces a totality, a universe in itself, aspects of which we may recognize to be society, "ultimate reality," or anything else. (1974:11)

I mean to take the festivals seriously, both in observing action and in heeding the concerns of actors. There are social morphology, ideology, and action as well as meaning for the actors in the performances we study. (1974:13)

If I have been faithful to the *rath jātrā* and the beliefs of those who are involved in it, the ideas which Östor presents in these passages should be familiar. The *rath*

⁴I use "liminality" in the expanded sense of Turner (1974:239-40) rather than the more restricted sense in which Van Gennep (1960), who coined the term and used it to describe rites of passage.

jātrā of Bungadya is not simply a representation of something else. It is a part of what Newars (and others) do every year in order to accomplish certain objectives. Newar beliefs which link the fate of the king and the country to the *jātrā* underline the fallacy of interpreting the festival as a symbolic recapitulation of the obvious, for the *jātrā* has the capacity to reveal what is previously unknown. The *jātrā* is also instrumental in that it brings rain; it does not merely symbolize the coming of the monsoon, it brings it. Frits Staai, in his monumental work on the Vedic fire altar, comments on the importance of understanding ritual as action as opposed to form which signifies something else.

When the performance started on April 12, 1975, I began to realize that there were many basic things I did not know. I came to understand only then what is meant when we say that ritual is "activity" (*karman*). Ritual not a thing that can be easily understood if one only has access to texts. More importantly, whatever texts may say, language does not explain such activity. It is we who ask for explanations in terms of linguistic expressions. For the ritualists, action comes first, and action, which includes recitation and chant, is all that counts. (1983:xxvi, emphasis added)⁵

This analysis of the *jātrā* of Bungadya uses the *jātrā* both as a window and a mirror. As stated above, it is a window into Newar society in the same sense as

⁵Because of the role which photography played in my own work, I cite the remainder of Staal's paragraph here. "Now, however, a curious convergence became apparent, for the same holds for cameramen, photographers, and sound engineers. Textual scholars will find it hard to understand how much I learned about Vedic ritual by seeing how Robert Gardner, who until then had known nothing about it, set about to film it. Despite the time we had spent preparing for the event, the rites generally took me by surprise. ... All in all, I was often lost. In confusion, I would look for Gardner, who was always where the action was, filming it with his assistants there, while Adelaide de Menil was doing the still photography. I am grateful to them, therefore, not only for providing massive documentation, but for making me see." (1983:xxvi) The tension between the roles of participant and observer is viscerally tangible every time one takes a picture, however encouraged one may be to do so. Though inherently alienating, the exercise of taking photographs can promote an orientation closer to that of ritual participants than it might seem.

a window is a part of a Newar house; it is one of its most distinctive features, a structural component, and permits a unique view of what lies within. It serves as a mirror in so far as it is capable of reflecting nearly any theory about the Newar which is brought to bear, for the diversity among the Newar makes it possible to say almost anything about them and have it accurately apply to some segment of the Newar population. The Newar are territorially exogamous, they are strictly endogamous; they are Hindu, they are Buddhist; their caste system is rigid, caste mobility is common. The challenge is to portray that which can be truthfully said about most Newars in such a way that their diversity becomes comprehensible, the "mirror" of analysis serving to accurately reflect both the universal and particular aspects of Newar culture.

The conclusions offered in this chapter will be structured according to the three prime areas of concern which were introduced in the beginning of the dissertation: the multiplicity of belief and practice, the role of sacrifice, and the status of the king. Each of these areas have received considerable attention in the literature, and it is not possible nor appropriate to engage in a complete review of the considerable body of work which addresses these questions in some fashion. I will point to the general theoretical implications of the findings presented in this dissertation by citing some works which have guided the thinking of many others and lesser known works which are particularly germane to the circumstances and issues considered here. In addition to these three areas I will devote a separate section to the issue of *sādhana* and the coercion of gods, for it plays a central role in the discussion of the politics of divinity which unites all of these other areas of concern.

Multiple Interpretation, Symbolic Multivocality, and Multivalence

In chapter five the various identities of the god I have consistently referred to as Bungadya were discussed. In addition to Bungadya, the epithets Rato Matsyendranath and Karunamaya are commonly used to refer to the same god. Many have adopted the gods honored by others by recognizing in the gods of others features of gods they already know. Buddha is therefore an *avatār* of Viṣṇu, Mañjuśrī is honored as Sarasvatī (and vice versa), Cangu Narayan is worshipped as *Hariṅhariharivāhana Lokeśwar* (and vice versa),⁶ and Christ is another of the prophets of Islam. I have noted that the name used to refer to Bungadya not only varies with respect to the speaker, but the context in which it was used. "Matsyendranath" is frequently used by Newars when they tell myths relating to the origin of the *jātrā*, possibly due to the role which his disciple, Gorakhnath, has come to play in them. Whatever name one might choose to refer to this god, there is general agreement that all of the above names are appropriate, though some might argue that some names are more appropriate than others.

Some have chosen to use the much-abused term "syncretic" to refer the nature of Bungadya/Matsyendranath, or "syncretism" to refer to the process whereby one image came to be identified in so many different ways.⁷ The Oxford English Dictionary defines syncretism as the "attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices, especially in philosophy" (1971). It should

⁶The primary identification of these divinities, of course, varies with the informant.

⁷Locke (1980:439) and Slusser are two among many who have characterized Bungadya in this fashion. The latter offers the following oxymoronic observation on the subject, stating that Matsyendranath is "...a deity who, despite his syncretic nature, is essentially Buddhist" (Slusser 1984:74).

be abundantly clear that though borrowing may have occurred between different sects and those of different religious orientations who honor the god referred to here as Bungadya, reconciliation has not been the result of this borrowing and incorporation. Substantial diversity of opinion exists even among those who would use the same name for the god, or who agree that they are Buddhists or Hindus. It appears that as soon as the word "syncretism" creeps into anthropological terminology, it bears the burden of an unwarranted assumption, that unified action or terminology are the hallmarks of homogenized belief. The Oxford English Dictionary supplies the following citation from Andrew Lang's 1887 work, Myth, Ritual and Religion, as the earliest example of the use of syncretism in the social sciences. "The process of syncretism, by which various god-names and god-natures are mingled, so as to unite the creeds of different nomes and provinces" (xv. II:94).

Alfred Métraux, who has used the term syncretism to refer to the intermingling of features of African and Catholic religions in Haiti,⁸ has also provided a concise critique of inappropriate assumptions which are often associated with the use of the term.

The equivocal reputation which Voodoo has acquired is in fact due to just this very syncretic quality by which it mixes together, in almost equal proportions, African rites and Christian observances. [But] no systematic attempt has been made to define, with any precision, the connection between these disparate elements or the way in which they integrate themselves in the whole system of Voodoo religious values. In other words, no one has raised the question of whether the Voodooist ranks the beliefs which he holds from his African ancestors on the same level as those he has derived from the Whites. An example usually cited of the fusion of the two

⁸The distinction between African and Catholic is clearly problematic, as many Africans are also Catholics. I preserve Métraux's usage in which "African" refers to the religion observed by the ancestors of the inhabitants of Haiti who were apparently originally brought as slaves from Guinea.

cults is the identification of African gods and spirits with Catholic saints. Authors drawing up lists of *loa*⁹ have taken care to mention only the saints which correspond with the most important of the spirits, and have never tried to pin down how this phenomenon works, or establish its real significance. This was a mistake, for in most cases there has been no real assimilation or common identity. The equivalence of gods and saints only exists in so far as the Voodooist has used pictures of saints to represent his own gods (1960:428-29).

I have cited Métraux at length because he raises issues which those who have used the term syncretism in reference to Newar religion have largely ignored, and because the case of Haitian Voodoo is one of the classic examples cited in reference to so-called "syncretic cults." He goes on to cite a phrase coined by Michel Leiris to refer to the cases of common identity which occur in the Voodoo religion, calling them instances of "concrete puns." This is a more accurate description of the poetic process whereby Saraswati becomes identified with Manjusri, and Matsyendranath with Bungadya. However, as was demonstrated in chapter five, the popularization of this identification can only be understood within its socio-political context; the pun must be politically appropriate as well as aesthetically apt.

Whatever name a devotee uses to refer to Bungadya, there are several beliefs concerning his identity which appear mutually contradictory, but which are widely shared. I have discussed the bisexual aspect of Bungadya, which is not at all contradictory from the Newar perspective, for the Newar honor other gods

⁹patron spirits who possess their devotees

which embody both male and female attributes.¹⁰ In addition to conceptualizing Bungadya as self sufficient¹¹ and embodying both male and female characteristics, he is also considered a bit of a philanderer.¹² It is said that once during the *jātrā*, while the *rath* was staying in Pore tole, Bungadya grew restless and slipped away from his *rath* in order to meet with a *jyāpuni* in Kirtipur. This liaison is honored every year when the *jhal pānju* and his assistants bring *prasād* from the *rath* to Kirtipur to offer to the *jyāpuni*'s descendants and other *jyāpu* women of the village.

¹⁰This concept of *bārūpa* gods which embody two characteristics extends into much of South Asia. Snellgrove has recently suggested that the Bodhisattva embodies the union of means (*upāya*), or the male principle, with wisdom (*prajñā*), which in Buddhist tantric thought is equated with the female principle. He states that "once he [the *yogin Bodhisattva* to be] has mastered the requisite techniques, he has no need of a feminine partner, for the whole process is reenacted within his own body." (1987:287) Though this was never articulated to me as such, the bisexual nature of Bungadya was frequently cited as an example of the god's all-encompassing nature. Snellgrove proceeds with a discussion of the impossibility of the same self sufficiency for the female tantric adept, a restriction which is consistent with the male identity of Bungadya superceding the female aspect, as it does in most contexts. Toffin's suggestion that the god now worshipped as Bungadya was probably originally a female deity is based on generalizations concerning worship of Bungadya which are not consistent with my own observations (Toffin 1979:64).

¹¹He is also considered to be in the company of two female consorts while in his temple. Two images of female deities are constantly in Bungadya's company, though they are never revealed, remaining concealed in wrappings of silk brocade. Janmadya, Naladya and Chobahadya are also accompanied by female deities alternately referred to as their "*śakti dyā:s*" or Taras; in either case it is clear that they are envisioned as the *Lokeśwar*'s consorts. In Nala and Jana Baha these images, one green and the other red, are painted at the same time as their consort. Bungadya's, however remain unpainted, apparently due to the fact that none of the *Niyekhus* are qualified to do so. The *Niyekhu*'s must first take an initiation at the Bhaktapur Taleju temple in order to paint these other images.

¹²Bharati provides another version of Matsyendranath's story, in which he "...is kept as a more or less voluntary captive of a tribe of Amazon women, sporting with their queen in pleasant oblivion of his sacred mission, until his great disciple Gorakhnath rescues him" (1975:224, note 2).

This *pujā* is one of only two occasions on which Bungadya offers *prasād* before receiving an offering; the other occasion occurs when the recipient is the king.¹³ Bungadya is also said to have had another tryst with a *Tamang* woman on the outskirts of Bungamati, and it is reported that until fairly recently women who wished to have children lay naked under Bungadya's *rath* in Pore tole in the hope that Bungadya would visit them in the night.

This susceptibility to human cravings would appear to be at odds with the image of Bungadya as a powerful god, however one may choose to characterize the god's sexual identity. Even more at variance with the notion of Bungadya's power, is the fact that he is also thought of as a child. The *jātrā* myth of origin states that he was the youngest of a demoness queen's 500 sons, and the timing of the Koduwa *melā* on mother's day is related to Bungadya's need to "see his mother's face." The subsequent series of *pujās* at Koduwa which is performed some months later is explained in terms of Bungadya's missing his mother. An elaborate *kalaś hwama pujā* offered during the *rath jātrā* in 1983 provided another example of this prevalent conception of Bungadya/Matsyendranath as child. Among the many offerings presented to Bungadya in the course of this annual ritual was a toy bear. When asked why this was included in the offerings, one of the "friends of the *dharma*" who was sponsoring the *pujā* replied that it was given so that Bungadya would have something to play with when he returned to Bungamati, for he was sure to be sad after the *jātrā* was over.¹⁴

¹³Another mark of the status accorded Bungadya's lover is that no *prasād* is distributed from the *rath* while the Kirtipur *pujā* is in progress.

¹⁴When I asked if they made such offerings every year, she replied that last year they had given Bungadya a bicycle.

These two examples of multiple interpretation have been added to the many others already cited in order to emphasize one point. Just as humans are occasionally treated as gods,¹⁵ gods are quite often treated as humans, not only in the sense that they are anthropomorphized, but in that they are considered vulnerable and in need of human affection and assistance. The distinction between the human and divine is blurred in both directions. This kind of multiple interpretation which is widely shared, varying with context rather than the individual, is a product of the "multivocality" of symbols described by Turner.

Turner, very early in his work, acknowledges another kind of variation of interpretation which is not shared, but reflects the individual characteristics of whoever it is that is doing the interpreting.

On the other hand, each participant in the ritual views it from his own particular corner of observation. He has what Lupton has called his own "structural perspective." His vision is circumscribed by his occupancy of a particular position, or even of a set of situationally conflicting positions, both in the persisting structure of society, and also in the rôle structure of the given ritual. Moreover, the individual is likely to be governed in his actions by a number of interests, purposes, and sentiments, dependent upon his specific position, which impair his understanding of the total situation (1967:27, originally presented in 1958).

Rather than systematically pursue the implications of the inevitability of such individualized interpretations, however, Turner uses this observation to justify his statement that,

"... I consider it legitimate to include within the total meaning of a dominant ritual symbol, aspects of behavior associated with it which the actors themselves are unable to interpret, and indeed of which

¹⁵Toffin (1986:74) notes the tendency to deify humans and the difficulty of drawing a boundary between the human and divine. "Dans un tel monde, clos et ordonné, à l'intérieur duquel l'homme n'a pas perdu sa place, la frontière entre divin et humain est de plus difficile à cerner. Le roi se voit à l'occasion traité comme un dieu, Indra ou Visnu le plus souvent, mais il n'est pas le seul."

they may be unaware, if they are asked to interpret the symbol outside its activity context." (1967:27)

Though I would be the last to deny the potential legitimacy of the anthropologist's privileged perspective (whether or not it is in agreement with the perspective of those being studied), it is unfortunate that Turner did not pursue his insight into interpretive variation further. His sensitive portrayal of "Muchona the Hornet, Interpreter of Religion" reveals not only how much he relied on the interpretations offered by Muchona, but the fact that Muchona was a marginal figure, deviant in several important respects from the Ndembu perspective. Though his insights were undoubtedly profound and useful, we are left to wonder how many of these insights were shared by those who shunned him. Turner has also pointed in this passage to the difficulty of interpreting symbols outside of what he calls their "activity context." In studying the *jātrā*, my primary methodological concerns were that both the "activity context" and interpreter identity (a context of another sort) should always be faithfully recorded and accounted for.¹⁶

The *jātrā* provides not only examples of multivocalic symbols, objects or events which have multiple meanings which are broadly shared, but examples of other events and objects whose meanings are a matter of debate. Though people may be simultaneously engaged in cooperative activity focussed on a particular entity or process, their perspectives concerning what they are doing and why may differ sharply. The Barahi perform *digu dyā: pujā* to Purnacandi on behalf of Bungadya who they claim as a member of their *phukī*, a claim which the *pānjus* ridicule for they know Bungadya to be a fellow *pānju*. Bungadya and his *jātrā* are

¹⁶It was, in part, because of these concerns that photographs were so helpful, for they portrayed contextual features that I might not have thought to mention while soliciting interpretations of events or objects.

thus symbolically multivalent, and are comprised of many elements and activities which are also symbolically multivalent. The identities and meanings of different aspects of the *jātrā* change depending upon who it is that is interpreting them, just as a multivalent atom displays different characteristics depending upon the nature of the other atoms with which it is combined. All three of these forms of multiple interpretation, the "concrete pun," multivocality, and multivalency, are influenced, if not inspired, by differences in access to power.

Sādhana, Coercion, and Theft

The struggle between gods and the struggle between gods and humans most clearly overlap in the utilization of *sādhana*, a means of coercing divinities to comply with human will. The importance of *sādhana* within Newar beliefs concerning their relations with divinities has been discussed at length in chapter four. *Sādhana* also plays a central role in the beliefs, ritual, and mythology connected with the *jātrā*. It was through the tantric trickery of *sādhana* that Bungadya was brought to the valley. The *nāga* who assisted the expedition was compelled to do so through *sādhana*, and the spirit of Bungadya was taken from Kamarup through *sādhana* as well. In one version of the origin myth, the final decision to honor the old man's recommendation to build Bungadya's temple in Patan, in spite of the fact that it was clearly inappropriately influenced, was based on the fact that the presence of Bungadya was possible only through deceit. It was decided that in light of this fact the old man's deceit in naming Patan as the site of the temple was not sufficient grounds for rejecting his decision.

The principle means used throughout the *jātrā*, and Newar ritual in general, to achieve proximity with divinity and the power it entails is through the coercive

process of *sādhana*.¹⁷ This process is characterized as trickery, and contrasted with the proximity achieved through possession.¹⁸ The latter is spontaneous and occurs with the grace of the god by whom one is possessed. The former is akin to kidnapping or theft.¹⁹

Both Bungadya and Naladya reside in their present locations by virtue of their having been stolen from somewhere else. Naladya is said to have originally been located in Amarapur in Bungamati, but was stolen and left by the thieves at Nala. It is for this reason that the *pānjus* still come to Nala to perform the annual bathing and reconsecration ceremonies. Cobahadya came to reside at his current hilltop shrine after being thrown out of an earlier shrine in Kathmandu, the forceful rejection of Cobahadya being the inversion of forceful abduction. The story often told to explain the origins of Cobahadya's shrine explains that a priest was in meditation on the river's edge when he saw the image of Cobahadya floating by, and used his power of *sādhana* to retrieve the deity from the river. It is this episode which is celebrated in the river *pujā* of Cobahadya, the most famous part of the annual series of reconsecration ceremonies performed at Cobaha and the equivalent of Bungadya's Koduwa mela. This aspect of the forceful transference

¹⁷*Sādhana* lies at the heart of both Buddhist and Hindu tantric ritual.

¹⁸I am indebted to Ellen Coon and Anjana Sakya, who are engaged in research on possession among Newar healers, for this insight.

¹⁹Bharati (1976) notes a similar attitude toward the process of *sādhana* among orthodox Brahmins in India, who deem yoga to be fraudulent, especially as taught by Matsyendranath and Goraknath. He further suggests that, "Theoretically, many orthodox Hindus grant the possibilities of these controls [meditative techniques for achieving enstasis], but they are not ready to admit that the Tantrists have achieved it in numbers which justify condoning tantric ritual and risking social disruption." (1976:99) Certainly the self-sufficiency of the tantric adept undermines the status of the Brahmin.

of a god from one place to another is not an edifice of the anthropologist's lively imagination, but an often articulated feature of these gods' identities.

The tradition of theft and trickery being used to abduct divinities is not confined to *Lokeśwars*, but is a common theme in Newar culture. Several stories relate how gods who could not resist the temptation to see the *rath jātrā* came in disguise to Patan during the festival, only to be found out and abducted, or otherwise manipulated. The *nāga* which hangs around Bungadya's neck is said to be one such victim, recognized by his arch enemy, the Garuda, and never again able to return to his mourning *nāgini* wife whose cries, it is said, can be heard at the Nakhu river where she lives. Another story attributes the origin of the large rest-house known as *Kāṣṭhamanḍapa* (from which Kathmandu gets its name), to the capture and coercion of the celestial wish-granting tree, *Kalpabrikśa*, who also came to view the *jātrā* in disguise.²⁰ The *digu dyā:* of the *Bārāhī* carpenters, Purnacandī, is also the victim of abduction, as related in this story told by a *Bārāhī*.

There was once a tantric named Purna who used to go to offer *darśan* every day at Dakshinkali²¹ without having eaten before he went. One day he got there and found that Siddhilakshmi, to whom he wanted to offer *darśan*, was not there. When Purna expressed his disappointment, Dakshinkali heard him and said that Siddhilakshmi had just left moments ago, and that she went down to the river to play. The tantric asked how he would know it was her and the goddess said that she was inside a water bubble. So he

²⁰This story is recorded in Wright's *vamsāvali* as follows:
 "In this reign [of Lakshminarsinha Malla, ruled Kathmandu 1619-1641], on the day of Machendranath's jatra, the Tree of Paradise was looking on at the ceremony in the form of a man, and, being recognized by a certain Biseta, was caught by him, and was not released until he promised the Biseta that, through his influence, he would be enabled to build a *satal* [resthouse] with the wood of a single tree. On the fourth day after this, the Kalpabriksha sent a *sa* tree, and the Biseta, after getting the Rajah's permission, had the tree cut up, and with the timber built the *satal* in Kantipur." (Wright 1972:211)

²¹A shrine, famous for the numerous sacrifices offered there, located about eight kilometers south of Patan.

went down to the river taking with him two clay saucers (*salicās*). When he found her he used his tantric powers to capture her in one of the saucers which he covered with the other, and brought Siddhilakshmi to Purnacandi, naming the place after himself.

Though not always considered a form of abduction, many deities have been "pulled" through *sādhana* to new additional locations for the convenience of their devotees. The *āgam dyā:* of the *pāñjus* is a case in point, for the Yogambara in their *āgam* in Bungamati was pulled there through *sādhana* from Mhaipi. The members of the *saṃgha* of Kwa Baha, the largest *saṃgha* in Patan, reside all over the valley. In many cases, they have established a *digu dyā:* in their own localities through the process of *sādhana*, however they must still come to the *bāhā* to be initiated as members of the *saṃgha*.²² In the instance of *sādhana* being used to establish what might be called a divine "annex," the source of the secondary divinity is, in some cases, regarded as more powerful than the shrine derived from it. The principle whereby proximity to the divine entails empowerment is again in force here, with a distinction being made between coerced presence and spontaneous presence.²³ The cases of Bungadya, Naladya, Cobahadya, and

²²Curiously, though the members of the Kwa Baha *saṃgha* worship the *caitya* in the center of the *bāhā:* courtyard as their *digu dyā:* (to which they do not offer sacrifice), those who have established *digu dyā:*s elsewhere refer to them as Yogambara, even though they share the same *digu dyā:* as those who worship the *caitya* in the *bāhā:* (David Gellner, personal communication, 1988). This phenomenon raises further questions which pertain to the complementarity of blood thirsty and blood abhorring gods.

²³"Spontaneous presence" is used here to refer to any number of scenarios whereby the location of a god in a particular place is accounted for, other than its coercion through *sādhana*. Images are often described as "found" as opposed to having been made, or deities may manifest themselves in an ephemeral fashion at a particular place where a permanent shrine is the erected as a marker of divine presence, and so forth.

Purnacandi, however, involve a shift in the primary locus of their power to a new place through the connivance and power of mortals.

Sacrifice and Benevolence

We have already seen how fierce deities must be invoked in the *kalaś* and *hwama puja* in order to protect the rite from those gods which are both fierce and malevolent. The link between the worship of the benevolent with the propitiation of the wrathful is also reflected in the *laysiwa puja* offering to a blood thirsty deity which preferably follows any *satwa: puja* performed for a compassionate deity such as Bungadya. Two primary gods which accept sacrifice are linked with the worship of Bungadya: Hayagriba Bhairab and Ikhayedya, or Yogambara. This relationship is not peculiar to Bungadya, however.

Cobahadya is also linked with a god just outside his *bāhā* who is known as Ikhayedya, and to whom sacrifice is offered during the course of the annual bathing and reconsecration ceremonies in Cobar. Cakwadya is linked with several gods which accept blood sacrifice. One of these gods, Mahankhal, occupies an open shrine within Cakwadya baha where a buffalo is sacrificed at the conclusion of the *jātrā* each year.²⁴ Cakwadya is also linked with the Bhairabs embodied in the wheels of his *rath* and at the tip of his *rath's* yoke (*dhwamā*). Several animals are sacrificed to these wheels while the *rath* stands in front of the *bāhā* with Cakwadya, also known as the benevolent Anandadi Lokeswar, still inside. Finally, Bhatuk Bhairab, located 500 meters south of Cakwadya baha, is linked with

²⁴It is generally presumed among scholars with whom I have spoken that sacrifice never takes place within the confines of the *bāhā*. Recall that the *cakra puja* sacrifices offered by the Kanphata yogis before the *jātrā* are performed inside Ta Baha, and numerous animals are killed within the *bāhā* for the many feasts consumed there.

Cakwadya in a fashion analogous to the manner in which Hayagriba Bhairab is linked with Bungadya. Extensive sacrificial rites, some of which are secret, are performed at Bhatuk Bhairab at the conclusion of the *jātrā*, and the *saṃgha* of Cakwadya *bāhā* performs other rituals and has feasts at Bhatuk Bhairab at other times of the year.²⁵ It is not clear if Janmadya is related to a particular Bhairab, though a goat is sacrificed to the wheels of his *rath* at the outset of his *jātrā* in Kathmandu every year.²⁶

On the basis of this evidence, it is clear that the sacrificial offerings made in close association with Bungadya are not "unusual." They cannot be attributed to the extreme degree of Hindu influence to which some suggest the worship of Bungadya has been subject by virtue of his popularity and absorption into the "Hindu pantheon" as Matsyendranath.²⁷ Though it is true that similar influence could be said to have influenced the rites of Cakwadya, it cannot be said of the rites of Cobahadya. Furthermore, many other benevolent gods attended and primarily worshipped by Buddhists are also linked with wrathful blood-thirsty gods.

This principle of complementarity is evident at Tham bahi in Kathmandu,

²⁵It is also at Bhatuk Bhairab that a sparrow and a fish are told the story of Cakwadya and then released into the air and the water to carry the story to the rest of the world.

²⁶Further investigation concerning the link between the Kel to! Ajima (located just outside Jana baha) and Janmadya may uncover a link between these two deities. Note above (chapter VII) concerning a *patāha* offering made to Janmadya which physically linked these two gods. Lewis (1984:109) notes that this Ajima is identified in inscriptions as Chamunda, and an image of Bhairab is included in her shrine.

²⁷It is particularly telling that sacrifice is so closely linked with the worship of Cakwadya, for the *saṃgha* of his *bāhā* is completely Śākya, and Śākyas often, in such cases, make the pretense of being more like their purported monastic ancestors than the *vajrācāryas*.

where a shrine to Jataka Ajima is located just outside the main entrance. This man-eating demoness is linked with the founding of the *bahī* by virtue of her destroying (and presumeably consuming) a king, thereby permitting his heir to build Tham bahi.²⁸ Blood sacrifices are performed to her image just outside the *bahī*. In many cases, major deities which abhor sacrifice will have a sort of proxy nearby, in the form of another god who accepts sacrifice. A famous example of this arrangement is the shrine of Vajrayogini, also identified as Ugara tara, located at Gum baha on the outskirts of Sankhu. It is said that the formerly carnivorous goddess now shuns sacrifice, but devotees frequently offer a sacrifice to a Ganesh conveniently located nearby after honoring the goddess. The most striking instance of a wrathful, or formerly wrathful divinity being linked with a benevolent god is the relationship between Harati Ajima and Swayambhu. The temple of this goddess, associated with smallpox and other childhood disease, is located only five meters away from one of the most revered Buddhist shrines in the world. Harati ajima, like Ugara tara/Vajrayogini, gave up her carnivorous ways, though it is clear that she has both the power to destroy children as well as protect them.

In more clear cut instances of this principle, many Bare claim that their *digu dyā:* is Yogambara or some other tantric deity which accepts sacrifice, though during their *digu dyā:* puja they actually worship an enshrined *caitya*. Locke (1985:14) has suggested that this confusion may be the result of needing a *digu dyā:* proxy who will accept sacrifice, since many consider sacrifice to be an essential aspect of *digu dyā:* worship.

Though others have debated the implications of the fact that Newar Buddhists marry and observe caste rules, and that monasteries essentially play no

²⁸See Slusser (1982:363) for a brief rendition of this story.

role in Newar Mahayana Buddhism,²⁹ little attention has been paid to the fact that sacrifice is also a vital part of their tradition. That a study of Bungadya, who is known for his benevolence and identified as a Bodhisattva, should point to the role of sacrifice in the Newar Buddhist tradition bears testimony to its importance.

One striking reference concerning a small "barony" in Chamba state in northwestern India suggests that the phenomenon of sacrifice being linked with Bodhisattvas has not been limited to Nepal.

There also exist, however, in Chamba a few Ranas in the original sense of the word, who still hold the position of their ancestors, the *rajanakas* of the inscriptions. Chief among them is the Rana of Triloknath whose barony extends over a large portion of Chamba-lahul. The tradition of his family is that they came originally from Jammu and settled at the place now known as Triloknath, before the celebrated idol of that name was established there. At the annual *mela* on the last day of Savan (Savana), in which the worship of Avalokitesvara, the Great Compassionate, is strangely blended with bloody sacrifices of an aboriginal type, the Rana takes the leading part. Though professedly a Hindu, he acts as manager of the famous Buddhist shrine, and appoints the lama *pujari* (Antiquities of Chamba State:116-17).

In view of our understanding of the importance of access to benevolent gods and the potential of interference from malevolent deities, it seems only logical that sacrifices would be offered to insure access to the power and munificence of benevolent deities if sacrifice were required for the propitiation of gods which threaten this contact.

The Kathmandu valley is a world populated by people and gods who constantly interact. The human population is scrupulous in avoiding the displeasure of powerful deities who favor blood as a means of propitiation. There is no reason to doubt that the Buddhists of India were in a similar milieu, surrounded by deities which were worshipped prior to the coming of the Buddha,

²⁹See Allen (1973), Greenwold (1974a, 1974b, 1977, 1978), Stahl (1975).

and which continued to demand propitiation in spite of the Buddha's teachings that they did not exist. Buddhism has never evolved in a spiritual or cosmological void, and frequently, in the eyes of the laity, has enveloped other deities and spirits, as the work of Tambiah (1977) in Thailand, Spiro (1970) in Burma, and Leach (1962) and Obeyesekere (1977) in Sri Lanka clearly reveal. Unfortunately, we have no knowledge of the beliefs of the Mahayana Buddhist layman in India, for our only evidence lies in inscriptions which record the deeds and thoughts of Buddhist kings, and texts recorded in monasteries chiefly for the benefit for monks. In spite of their clear limitations as historical evidence, these pronouncements and theories are often used as the bases of criticism of modern Newar practice and belief.

The position of the Newar Buddhist who marries, observes caste laws, and offers blood sacrifice is anomalous by virtue of a false comparison. To the degree that the existence of a Buddhist laity is acknowledged in India during the period of Buddhist efflorescence at the time of Asoka, for example, assumptions made about the day-to-day lives of Buddhists are based largely on monastic tracts and pangyrics.³⁰ To compare this material with contemporary ethnographic accounts does disservice to both.

The *Vajrācārya* who participates in sacrifice also distances himself from it. Though he blesses the knife he never wields it. Though he participates in sacrifices performed directly in front of Bungadya, he shields them from Bungadya's view. Newars who describe themselves as Buddhist agree that

³⁰One such effort, by Nalinaksa Dutt (1945), concludes that by the second century A.D. a Buddhist laity was being cultivated through the popularization of Jataka and Avadana stories about the previous lives of the Buddha and his disciples, and that the option of achieving Bodhisattvahood was not limited to monks.

sacrifice constitutes a departure from ideal behavior. Possibly due to the relatively new influence of Theravada in Nepal, some have renounced sacrifice, but offering sacrifice by no means constitutes an occasional deviation from the norm. Blood sacrifice is a pervasive and enduring aspect of the lives of many Newar Buddhists. Any definition of Buddhism which does not accommodate the only surviving community of South Asian Mahayana Buddhists is deficient from the anthropological, if not common-sensical perspective. The principle of *ahimsa* which is at issue here is observed even as it is violated. Those who proclaim that the Newar cannot be Buddhist because of their bloody ways confuse thought with action. Though it may not always be prudent to believe one's informant, it is imperative that one at least listen to those whose beliefs one is trying to describe, instead of merely watching their actions.

Proximity, Power, and Vulnerability: The King and Bungadya

In the previous chapter, the proximity of the king to divinity was discussed with respect to two kinds of gods, the *āgaṃ dyā:*, or tutelary god of the king's lineage, and the *raṣṭradyā:*, or divine guardian of the kingdom. Toffin (1986) notes that the relationship between the king and this second kind of divinity weakens the opposition between status and power cited as a hallmark of the caste system by Dumont (1980:215). As Toffin (1986:90) also notes, the role of Brahmin as mediator between *raṣṭradyā:* and king is also compromised in various ways, including efforts to physically link the palace with the god's temple, and the fact that the king is regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu, another of the *raṣṭradyā:*s of Nepal. The relationship between Bungadya, who is also an important *raṣṭradyā:*, and the king, is difficult to reconcile with the Dumontian notion of the separation

of divine status and secular power. The beliefs and practices which concern the *rath jātrā* reveal an intimate relationship between the fate of the king and Bungadya. Furthermore, to the extent that the relationship between the king and Bungadya is mediated at all by priests, they are Buddhist *pānjus*, and not Brahmins.

The status of the king in Nepal with respect to gods with whom he is associated fits into a continuum of variation which spreads geographically from India into Tibet and Southeast Asia. The body of literature which pertains to the issue of divine kingship in the sub-continent and elsewhere is immense, and can only be alluded to here. At one end of the continuum is what we must designate as Dumont's ideal type of Hindu polity, in which secular power and divine status are utterly distinct.³¹ At the opposite end of the continuum is the divine king, utterly divorced from temporal control, as exemplified by the nineteenth century Balinese Negara described by Geertz (1980).

The status of the king in Nepal, as revealed by the *jātrā*, lies between these two poles, closer to what Tambiah (1976) would describe as a galactic polity. But it is an aspect of the Negara which I wish to stress with respect to the case of king in the Kathmandu valley.³² Power which is derived in part from what Dumont would call status, i.e. sacrality, entails vulnerability by virtue of the web of divine-

³¹Both the boundary between the king and the divine and the boundary between the brahmin and power are tenuous. As Heesterman (1985:44) has noted, "...the preeminence of the brahmin is not based on his priesthood, but on his being the exponent of the values of renunciation. The position of the brahmin is, therefore as precarious as it is eminent. The brahmin, then, is the exemplar of the irresolvable tension that is at the heart of Indian civilization."

³²To the extent that the current Shah king is invested in this particular web of divine and human interrelationships it is by virtue of his ancestors inserting themselves into the sacral role occupied by their Malla predecessors.

human interrelationships which sacral power entails. Heesterman alludes to this vulnerability in describing what he calls the "conundrum" of the king's authority in India.

The king must all the time perform a precarious balancing act between forcefully proclaiming his own writ to be *dharma* (law, doctrine) and, on the other hand, following unassumingly what his subjects tell him to be *dharma*" (1981:8).

He also states that,

...the king is said to need the people's consent, to be "propped up on both sides" by the people and to be capable of showing strength only through the people. That this dependence is, of course, mutual, does not alter the fact that the king is tied up in a closely meshed web..... The king has to belong to the community but at the same time he must be foreign to it so as to guarantee his authority" (1981:5).³³

This interface between the public, divine power, and the king is manifested in the *rath jātrā*. It is the public who build, pull, and either save the *rath* from disaster or lead it, albeit unwillingly, to destruction. Current belief and legend link the fate of the king and kingdom with the success or failure of the *jātrā*. The negative consequences of remaining aloof from the popular festival of Bungadya is revealed in the stories which account for the royal Brahmin *Rājopādhyays'* involvement in the *jātrā*. The extreme alienation from temporal power entailed in emulation of the divine as exemplified by the Negara of Bali led Geertz to proclaim that in nineteenth century Bali,

Court ceremonilalism was the driving force of court politics; and mass ritual was not a device to shore up the state, but rather the state, even in its final gasp, was a device for the enactment of mass ritual. Power served pomp, not pomp power. (1980:13)

In the case of the *rath jātrā*, power and pomp clearly serve one another.

³³The Malla kings never referred to themselves as "Newar," maintaining that they were distinct from the people they ruled.

In the light of the work of Heesterman and others, it is unclear where Dumont's segregation between "power" and "status" ever existed but in theory. The works of Hocart (1970) and Stein (1983) have emphasized the importance of the ritual and ceremonial roles of the medieval Indian kings. In a study of Vijayanagara,³⁴ Fritz, Michell, and Rao (1986) emphasize the importance of the "...partnership of ruler and deity..." and the direct connection which existed between these "partners." Though these authors note a division between the "royal centre" and the "sacred centre" at the site of this medieval capitol, they add that,

...we do not intend to suggest a simple sacred/profane duality in which residential zones exclusively for gods and priests are opposed to those for king and court. On the contrary, kings played a significant role in the temple rituals and festivals of the sacred center; the royal centre incorporated numerous temples and shrines, and priests were important advisors to the king (1986:149).

The most important of the temples in the "royal centre" of Vijayanagara is the "state chapel" dedicated to the god Ramachandra, a deity who is clearly a *raṣṭradīyā*: in the sense I have used above with reference to polity and divinity in the Kathmandu valley. Fritz et al note that this temple is directly connected with the residential area of the royal complex, and straddles the line which divides the area of private residence from that of public ritual display.

Here Ramachandra is both an agent of separation and a means of cohesion since we view these zones as incorporating a number of dualities: performance/residence, activity/rest, public/private, male/female, giving out/taking in, etc..... Such an emphasis on Rama as the nucleus of the city plan suggests the outstanding significance of this deity for the Vijayanagara rulers. Here the morphology of the city and the mythic landscape established a homology between the domain of the king and that of the god. The

³⁴A medieval Hindu kingdom established in South India in 1336 which maintained its independence well into the sixteenth century (Basham 1967:77).

rituals that took place in and around the Ramachandra Temple affirmed this connection between king and god (1986:151).

The rulers of Vijayanagara also seem to have had the equivalent of their own tutelary *āgaṃ dyā:*, as described in the Nepalese case.

First, as purely local rulers, the Vijayanagara kings obtained the support of the sacred power (*śakti*) of Pampa, the indigenous goddess linked with the sacred centre on the south bank of the Tungabhadra River..... The second stage in this process was the incorporation of the *śakti* into an orthodox male deity, Virupaksha. in order to be supported by the power of Virupaksha, the kings erected a temple dedicated to this god in a newly laid out royal zone [the royal centre]. By an ever-expanding process, the cults of Virupaksha and other deities were incorporated into the king's realm. Over two centuries, this empowered the Vijayanagara rulers as they continually expanded their capital and empire (Fritz et al 1986:151).³⁵

Though the relative importance of Virupaksha within this expanding realm shifted over the history of the kingdom, the kings "...never relinquished their connection with Virupaksha who was their protective divinity." (Fritz et al 1986:151) Though the evidence from Vijayanagara is not conclusive with respect to the intimacy of the relationship between the king and Pampa/Virupaksha, this relationship clearly entails divine empowerment, a contradiction of terms from the Dumontian perspective.

This brief consideration of other evidence of the nature of Hindu and Hindu/Buddhist polity by no means exhausts the issues which pertain to the relationship between the Hindu king and divinity. To fully consider the extensive literature on this subject is beyond the purview of this dissertation. However, in the few examples cited, it is clear that the relationship between the king and Bungadya revealed in the *jātrā* is not exceptional, but rather fits what many

³⁵The evolutionary process depicted here suggests a parallel with the shrine of Mhaipi Ajima, wherein Jyanidakini Yogambara is identified simply with the name of her male consort, Yogambara, who is the *digu dyā:* of many *Bare*.

archaeologists and historians have said about medieval Indian polity. Though the *jātrā* may be unique in its capacity to reveal the vulnerability of the king which is entailed in his connection with divinity and his responsibility to his subjects, the structural position of the king as revealed in the beliefs and practices of the *jātrā* are not unique, but typical in the South Asian context.

I do not mean to suggest in this analysis that the legitimacy of the current monarch in Nepal would crumble in the face of a disastrous *rath jātrā*. The legitimacy of his reign is far more forcefully conveyed in the show of military prowess during the festival of Gode Jatra, where it is not unusual for troops, conveyed by helicopter, to destroy a small house set up on the parade grounds in the center of Kathmandu for the purpose of displaying the reach of royal power. The same king which reviews this display still seeks the annual blessing of the Kumari and still attends the display of Bungadya's *bhoto*. Though it would be foolish to guess at his personal motives for performing these acts, it is clear that popular belief views the king as inextricably bound in the prerogatives and obligations entailed by his connections with these divinities.

The Politics of Divinity

As Frazer has argued, "ritual and politics meet in food."³⁶ Bungadya provides the rain which is vital for the crops of the Kathmandu valley. The primacy of this need, and the power of any being or entity which can provide or deny food, has undoubtedly contributed to the elaboration of devotion to this god which is described in the preceding pages. The myriad ways in which people honor Bungadya and the numerous beliefs concerning him, can only be understood if

³⁶As paraphrased by Feeley-Harnik (1985:288).

Bungadya is recognized as a locus of power. Bloch is half right when he suggests that "...it is fruitful, first to look at politics and then at religion, which is seen as the exercise of a particular form of power rather than look at religion out of the political context and see it as a form of explanation (1974:79). It is, however, impossible to look at either politics or religion without looking at the other at the same time.

Levi Strauss has observed that "Social order cannot cheat the hierarchy of the cosmos and get away with it" (1961:229). The inverse is equally true, for the cosmos, or realm of divinity, obeys the same laws which dictate social order. This is not to say that ritual or the cosmos which it engages is a reflection of society, but that the world of human society and the world of the gods are one. Gods are constrained by social order; they too must be initiated. Their very identity is dependent upon the social status of the individual making the identification. People, in turn, derive their social status, in large part, from their association with gods. A fundamental requirement for membership within a Newar community is one's link with a clan deity, a link which is dependent upon the observance of the social ties of the *phukī*. As Toffin (1984) has noted, the distinction between those who are initiated (*dekha dupim*) and have direct access to their *āgaṃ dyā*., and those who are not initiated and who lack such access, is a fundamental division within Newar society. The beliefs of those connected with Bungadya's *rath jātrā* clearly reflect their social identity, just as they define themselves, with respect to other people, in terms of the nature of their access to Bungadya.

This dissertation has examined the roles gods play in people's lives, and how the nature of peoples' lives shape their beliefs about the gods they honor. The struggle among subjects and kings for survival, recognition, and power

engages the struggle of gods among themselves, and all are absorbed in the politics of divinity.

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APPENDIX A: *Jātrā* Time Line

This time line is a brief overview of the portion of the annual ritual cycle involving Bungadya which concerns the *rath jātrā*. It is intended to provide a convenient means of contextualizing particular details of the *jātrā* discussed in the body of the text, and to demonstrate the extensiveness of *rath jātrā* activities. Most of the events listed are popularly considered to be parts of the *rath jātrā* or preparations for it. Other events included are key features of the ritual cycle which are conceptually linked with the *jātrā*; the annual trip from Bungamati to Patan, for example, is not part of the *jātrā per se*, yet reveals much about the *jātrā* and can only be understood with reference to the *jātrā*'s mythical origin.

It is unlikely that any single informant would generate the list of events compiled here; in fact, very few, if any, indigenous experts are likely to know of all the events which it includes. Neither would many of the participants noted in the list consider it to be exhaustive. Because the *jātrā* has different meanings and entails different obligations for different individuals, there is no general consensus concerning which of any but the most obvious events are central to the *jātrā*.

This timeline, therefore, represents a compromise between the anthropologist's need for a brief coherent overview and the desires of participants to convey their own perspectives and importance.

The following criteria for inclusion have been used in creating this timeline.

1. All events are annual occurrences.¹
2. All events which the priestly attendants of Bungadya, the *pānjus*, regard as essential to the *jātrā*, including preparations for the *jātrā*, are included to the extent that they have been revealed or discovered.
3. Events which other participants view as vital to the *jātrā* and are publically known features of the *jātrā* are noted.

¹This strictly applies to all but the twelve-year *jātrās*, which involve all the events listed here as well as others connected with the longer route from Bungamati to Patan. In the twelve year *jātrā*, for example, the image bathing and *rath* building occur in Bungamati, thus the context and timing described for certain events would vary in the longer *jātrā*.

4. Many events which are ostensibly secret or involve only a few individuals are regarded as vital to the *jātrā* by their participants. These events are listed if they are essential prerequisites to or consequences of more public activities which are more generally considered vital components of the *jātrā*.²

5. Events which are widely known among the populace but which specialized participants may not consider worthy of mention are also included.

Each event is listed by its most commonly used Newari name if it has a common Newari appellation. This is followed by an English gloss where appropriate.

The timing of events which occur each year on the same date is noted according to the lunar calendar commonly used by the Newar for timing rituals and festival events. This system employs the same names of the months as used in the *Vikram Samvat* solar calendar, but bisects them into their bright (*śukla*) and dark (*kṛṣṇa*) lunar fortnights. The Newar do have distinctive calendrical terms, including Newari names of lunar months, but they are used far less frequently than the terms employed here.

If the timing of an event strictly depends on when a preceding event occurs, this is noted. All Gregorian dates for the 1983-1984 ritual cycle are provided, each date starting with the year, followed by the month, then the day. Additional Gregorian dates for any given entry indicate when the event was observed in other years. Events which occur on the same day are bracketed within short lines which segment the "Event" column.

A brief description outlining principal activities and their location(s) is provided, along with a note of any particularly distinctive feature of the event described. Participants not noted in the description text are listed in brackets below the description text.

²For example, the *Bārāhī* participate in many private feasts to which they attach great importance yet which have little significance for others. The *Gākhūs* share a private feast which articulates their personal identification with Bhairab, an important theme reiterated often in the *jātrā*. Several of the *Bārāhīs'* many feasts are not listed here, whereas the *Gākhūs'* feast is.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Timing</u>	<u>Description</u>
<i>Sāhit swayegu</i> (determination of auspicious moment)	preferably before <i>Kārtik</i> full moon, 83/11/17, 82/12/02	Astrologers (<i>pengu thay josipim</i>) determine auspicious timing for bringing god to Patan in <i>pātī</i> at Bhimsenthan, followed by small <i>pujā</i> performed by <i>pānju pujārī</i> . [G.S. <i>subba</i> , attracts crowd]
<i>Rang Pujā</i> (painting <i>pujā</i>)	83/11/19, 82/12/05	<i>Niyekhus</i> superficially repair and paint image in Bungamati before god is brought to Patan
<i>Hwama Pujā</i> (fire sacrifice)	day of <i>Rang Pujā</i>	<i>Pānju pujārī</i> ¹ offers <i>kalaś hwama pujā</i> in Amarapur before Bungadya temple. [2 additional <i>pānjus</i> , <i>jātrā jajman</i>]
<i>Hayagriba Bhairab Bālī</i> (sacrifice)	two days before bringing god to Patan (83/11/19) evening	Goat is sacrificed to Bhairab followed by <i>samay</i> and feast. [<i>pānju pujārī</i> , <i>suwa</i>], Bhairab temple attendant]
<i>Jogambhara hwama</i> (Ikhyae <i>hwama</i>) (fire sacrifice)	two days before bringing god to Patan (83/11/19) evening	<i>Pānju pujārī</i> performs <i>hwama pujā</i> including meat among items offered to fire at Ikhyae. [<i>suwa</i>], <i>jātrā jajman</i>]
All-night vigil	two nights before god brought to Patan	People from all over the valley, including <i>Tamangs</i> and other non-Newars, come to spend the night at Bungadya's temple in Bungmati
<i>Palan</i> (panjus break fast)	day before bringing god to Patan (83/11/20) morning	<i>Pānjus</i> who will carry the god (and have been fasting) eat a ritual meal they cook themselves by the Nakhu.
Patan Malla King Procession	day before bringing god to Patan (83/11/20) morning	Representative of the Malla King of Patan comes to Bungamati with <i>tarbar</i> procession.
<i>Sāhit halegu</i> (movement at auspicious moment)	day god brought to Patan (83/11/21)	<i>Jātrā jajman</i> ² uses water clock to determine <i>sahit</i> moment; attending <i>pānju</i> ritually moves god in the temple
<i>Hayagriba Bhairab Bālī</i> (sacrifice)	day god brought to Patan (83/11/21) a.m.	goat is sacrificed to Bhairab with the Malla king as <i>jajman</i>
<i>Dyā: Halegu</i> (palanquin procession)	Determined by <i>sahit</i> 82/12/08, 83/11/21	<i>Pānjus</i> carry <i>khat</i> with god in a procession led by the <i>gurujuya paltan</i> and representative of the Patan Malla King with the <i>tarbar</i> procession, god's treasure, <i>māhām</i> , etc.

<i>Snan Maṇḍala Puṇā</i>	84/01/16 afternoon, 5 1/2 hours	1. <i>Pānju puṇārī</i> performs <i>kalaś puṇā</i> inside Ta Baha temple with <i>jātrā jajman</i> and G.S. assistant; walk to Bunge ³ 2. <i>P. puṇārī</i> performs <i>kalaś puṇā</i> in front of Bungadya temple in Bunge (essentially same rite as in Patan), then performs 3. <i>kalaś puṇā</i> in front of Mahankhal temple (originally housed <i>Lokeśwar</i>), then performs 4. <i>kalaś puṇā</i> to Hayagriba Bhairab. [3&4 also involve 2 <i>suwa:s</i> and attendant to Hayagriba]
<i>Kumārī Puṇā</i> (worship of living incarnation of goddess Taijeju)	conclusion of <i>Snan Maṇḍala Puṇā</i> 84/01/16 evening	1. <i>Pānju puṇārī</i> performs <i>Lasakus puṇā</i> for Bunge <i>Kumārī</i> at entrance to Hayagriba Bhairab (where she has been carried by a <i>suwa:</i>) then performs 2. <i>kalaś puṇā</i> in conjunction with <i>thakāli pānjuni</i> who ritually feeds <i>Kumārī</i> in front of Hayagriba Bhairab
<i>Yachinkāyegu Puṇā</i>	84/01/19 <i>puṇā</i> starts in early afternoon and continues for over five hours, moving from one location to the next	1. <i>Pānju puṇārī</i> offers <i>hwama puṇā</i> in front of Bungadya temple at Ta Baha; 4 <i>pānjus</i> simultaneously read different sections of the <i>Gunakāraṇḍavyūha</i> . 2. <i>P. puṇārī</i> ⁴ then performs <i>hwama puṇā</i> (<i>lkhaye cā</i> (night) <i>puṇā</i>) which includes an offering of meat) at <i>lkhaye</i> in Bunge, with the <i>jhal</i> & <i>khal pānjus</i> 3. secret sacrifice, location secret, provides meat used in <i>lkhaye cā puṇā</i> 4. <i>Pānju puṇārī</i> and <i>jātrā jajman</i> perform <i>kalaś puṇā</i> to Hayagriba Bhairab, followed by a 5. ritual snack (<i>samay</i>) for all <i>pānju</i> families.
<i>Cā Puṇā</i> (clay blessing)	84/01/27 afternoon	<i>P. puṇārī</i> performs <i>kalaś puṇā</i> in Tapha, Patan to bless clay to be used to make pots for the <i>kalaś puṇā</i> in Ta Baha 3 days before <i>Bungaya:</i> . [2 <i>pānjus</i> , 5 <i>Kumhas</i> (potters), <i>J. jajman</i>]
<i>Yachinkāyegu Puṇā</i> (second occurrence)	84/02/01 afternoon	<i>P. puṇārī</i> and <i>jātrā jajman</i> repeat <i>yachinkāye puṇā</i> but for <i>khal</i> and <i>jhal pānjus</i> and without <i>bali</i> offered to Hayagriba; takes place in Ta Baha and at the Bunge Hayagriba Bhairab
<i>Pīth Puṇā</i> (<i>puṇā</i> to <i>Aṣṭamātrkāś</i>)	84/02/11 morning and afternoon	1. <i>P. puṇārī</i> performs <i>kalaś puṇā</i> at <i>lkhaye</i> , Bungamati with three <i>jajmans</i> (<i>J. jajman</i> , <i>jhal/khal pānjus</i>) and a separate set of <i>puṇā</i> paraphernalia for each <i>jajman</i> . [<i>pānju</i> assistants to <i>jhal/khal pānjus</i> (<i>bhaya:s</i>), <i>suwa:</i>]

<i>Pīth Puṇā</i> (cont.)	84/02/11 morning thru early afternoon	2. <i>Pānju puṇārī, jajmans, suwa:s, and bhaya:s</i> proceed along the 12 year <i>jātrā</i> route, stopping at various points to make offerings and perform dance <i>mudrās</i> to the <i>Aṣṭamātrkāś</i> located along the route, principally at official stopping places for the <i>rath</i> 3. <i>P. puṇārī</i> performs <i>kalaś puṇā</i> , as at <i>Ikhaṇe</i> , in honor of <i>Chyaskamuni</i> , located in <i>Jawalakhel</i> where the <i>rath</i> comes to rest. 4. <i>Kwena puṇā</i> to <i>Ganeś</i> at end of route, and feast.
<hr/> <i>Jivanyās Puṇā</i> (removal of 'life' <i>puṇā</i>)	15th day of <i>Caitra śukla</i> ; <i>pūrṇīmā</i> (full moon) (84/04/15, 83/04/27) evening	<i>Pānju puṇārī</i> draws <i>jīvan</i> (life-spirit) out of <i>Bungadya's</i> image and into a <i>kalaś</i> inside <i>Ta Baha</i> temple using <i>sādhana</i> .
<i>Śanti - āgam kilā puṇā</i> (protective rite, secret offering)	15th day of <i>Caitra śukla</i> ; <i>pūrṇīmā</i> (84/04/15, 83/04/27) night	<i>Pānju puṇārī</i> , with <i>pānju</i> assistant and <i>jātrā jajman</i> , performs <i>kalaś puṇā</i> on bathing platform at <i>Maju sima</i> , in <i>Lagankhel</i> , <i>Patan</i> , which ends with secret rite which <i>pānjus</i> cannot see
<hr/> <i>Nhawam jātrā</i> (procession before ritual bathing)	1st day of <i>Baiśākh</i> <i>kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/16, 83/04/28) morning	<i>Jyāpu guthīs</i> from 4 <i>tols</i> in <i>Patan</i> form procession, led by 'Swayambhu Bhagwan,' carrying <i>puṇā</i> materials used during <i>jātrā</i> . Procession moves through <i>Patan</i> from <i>Ta Baha</i> to <i>Maju sima</i> bathing platform, members receiving <i>tika</i> from <i>jyāpu thakākali</i> at astrologers' platform in <i>Mangal bajar</i> .
<i>Kalaś puṇā</i>	1st day of <i>Baiśākh</i> <i>kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/16, 83/04/28) afternoon	<i>Pānju puṇārī</i> , assisted by another <i>pānju</i> and with the <i>jātrā jajman</i> , transfers the <i>jīvan</i> of <i>Bungadya</i> from <i>kalaś</i> to large silver urn, and summons <i>nāgas</i> and guardian deities into 8 urns, the 4 with <i>nāgas</i> to be used in <i>mahāśnan</i> .
<i>Baymwa: puṇā</i> (base for <i>gajū</i> at top of <i>rath</i>)	1st day of <i>Baiśākh</i> <i>kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/16, 83/04/28) afternoon	<i>Yangwal</i> foreman blesses <i>baymwa</i> : after completing annual repairs in brief ceremony in <i>Ta Baha</i> .
Preparation and procession of flower crowns for <i>Bungadya</i> and <i>Cakwadya</i>	1st day of <i>Baiśākh</i> <i>kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/16, 83/04/28) afternoon	<i>Jyāpu</i> , whose family traditionally performs the task, makes flower crowns in the garden of the <i>Patan Durbar</i> , and is then escorted by <i>gurujaya paltan</i> to <i>Cakwadya Baha</i> and <i>Ta Baha</i>

Presentation of wasa (medicine) to be used in <i>pujā</i> after bathing	1st day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/16, 83/04/28) late afternoon <i>Baiśākh</i>	Unidentified man and woman bring ritual substances in bronze ewers from Taleju temple in Patan Malla palace first to Cakwadya, then to Maju sima bathing platform
<i>Bunganhawan</i> or <i>Mahāsnan</i> (ritual bathing of Bungadya)	1st dya of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/16, 83/04/28) late afternoon	1. Ritually pure <i>pānjus</i> place Bungadya image in palanquin, and place flower crown on his head in Ta Baha. 2. 8 pure <i>Pānjus</i> carry the image in procession to Maju sima, preceded by <i>jātrā jajman</i> (who pours water in path of palanquin), <i>gurujaya paltari</i> , and Patan Malla king <i>tarbar</i> contingent. 3. <i>Niyekhus</i> , <i>pānjus</i> , and/or <i>suwa:s</i> carry water in silver <i>nāga</i> urns to bathing platform. 4. <i>Pānju pujārī</i> & water bearers circumambulate platform blessing water, invoking guardians of 4 directions and <i>nāgas</i> . 5. <i>Pānju pujārī</i> and water bearers bathe image.
<i>Cañile/Hamwakhim</i> <i>pujā</i> (procession and blessing of <i>rath</i> supports)	1st day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/16, 83/04/28) evening	<i>Bārāhī nāṭke</i> and <i>Yangwal nāṭke</i> and <i>bhai nāṭke</i> circumambulate Ta Baha temple then Maju sima 3 times. <i>Yangwa nāṭkes</i> perform simple <i>pujā</i> to supports for <i>rath</i> construction in Pulcowk, then eat secret feast.
Secret funereal <i>pujā</i> after bathing	1st day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/16, 83/04/28) late night	Balls of dough are prepared for secret <i>pujā</i> on Maju sima bathing platform next to image, followed by secret funereal procession back to Ta Baha. [<i>Pānju pujārī</i> , <i>jātrā jajman</i> , <i>suwa:</i> , and others (?)] Priests from Harasiddhi bring meat, possibly for use in <i>pindas</i> .
Begin <i>rath</i> construction	2nd day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> (84/04/17, 83/04/29) morning	<i>Bārāhī</i> carpenters start <i>rath</i> construction after <i>nāṭke</i> performs brief <i>pujā</i> to god underneath the <i>rath</i> building site.
Presentation of <i>Prasād</i> to King in Kathmandu	2nd day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/17, 83/04/29) morning	<i>Pānju pujārī</i> , <i>khal pānju</i> , and 2 other <i>pānjus</i> bring <i>prasād</i> from secret <i>pujā</i> done after bathing to the King of Nepal at his palace in Kathmandu.
Sacrifice to Hayagriha Bhairab	2nd day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/17, 83/04/29) morning	<i>Pānju pujārī</i> presides over goat sacrifice to Hayagriha in Bungamati, followed by feast in the afternoon. [1984 substitute <i>pujārī</i> performed]

<i>Pānista puṇā</i> (consecration of rath)	8th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/23, 83/05/05) evening	<i>Pāṇju puṇārī</i> , assisted by another <i>pāṇju</i> , conducts an elaborate <i>kalaś puṇā</i> front of half-completed <i>rath</i> , consecrating framework and <i>simbhu twakha</i> , the top-most cane part of <i>rath</i> . The <i>jhal</i> and <i>khal</i> <i>pāṇjus</i> and the <i>jātrā jajman</i> are <i>jajmans</i> . [Yangwal <i>bhai nāṭke</i> and other <i>Yangwals</i>]
wheels placed on <i>rath</i>	10th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/25, 83/05/07) morning	<i>Bārāhī</i> roll the <i>rath</i> wheels from shed in Jawalakhel to Pulcowk and install them on partially completed <i>rath</i> frame. <i>Bārāhī nāṭke</i> performs brief <i>puṇā</i> to <i>rath</i> and the god underneath.
<i>Lhusā</i> (decorative panels) repair and feast for carpenters	12th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/27) all day	<i>Bārāhī</i> repair decorative panels for the <i>rath</i> in Mahabaudda, U Baha, Patan, and then are feasted by <i>Vajrācārya lhusā guṭhī</i> from Mahabaudda.
<i>Kalaś puṇā</i>	13th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/28, 83/05/09, 82/04/20) night	<i>Pāṇju puṇārī</i> , with <i>pāṇju</i> assistant and <i>jātrā jajman</i> , performs extensive <i>kalaś hwama puṇā</i> with 72 clay pots, into which he invokes protective deities, and blesses <i>puṇā</i> materials. <i>Jātrā jajman</i> maintains vigil over <i>puṇā</i> pots overnight. Pots are then given to key <i>jātrā</i> participants.
<i>Khicā bhu</i> (feast for dogs)	13th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/28) late afternoon - midnight	1. <i>Pāṇju puṇārī</i> officiates at buffalo sacrifice at Ikhaye, Bungamati. Butchers from Bungamati bleed, skin, and butcher buffalo. Officiating <i>pāṇjus</i> feed some meat to dogs. 2. Buffalo is re-assembled in front of Hayagriba, and ritually sacrificed again 3. 2nd Buffalo is sacrificed to Hakumha Bhairab 4. G.S. officials oversee distribution of meat for feasts and workers. 5. Feast followed by simple <i>puṇā</i> for Mahankhal & Hayagriba
<i>Bhuṇā puṇā</i> (offering of cooked rice)	14th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/29, 83/05/10, 82/04/21) night	<i>Pāṇju puṇārī</i> performs <i>kalaś puṇā</i> , which involves 9 baskets of cooked rice topped with inflated intestines, on E side of Ta Baha temple. Baskets given to <i>Pore</i> afterward. [Vajrācārya <i>pāṇju</i> assistant, <i>jātrā jajman</i> , <i>suwa</i> .]
<i>Daśa karma puṇā</i> (ten life cycle rites) with <i>Niyekhus</i>	14th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/29, 83/05/10) late night to early morning	1. <i>Niyekhus</i> bring image, which is swathed in cloth (like a corpse), into front antechamber of temple.

<i>Daśa karma puṣā</i> (ten life-cycle rites) with <i>Niyekhus</i> (cont.)	14th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/29, 83/05/10) late night	2. <i>Pānju puṣārī</i> transfers <i>jīvan</i> from <i>Barmhu kwam</i> urn to image. 3. Bhaktapur king's (<i>kwape juju</i>) proxy opens the eyes of the image with his ceremonial <i>tarbar</i> 4. <i>Pānju puṣārī</i> performs 10 life cycle rites for image with the <i>Niyekhu</i> image painters. [2 <i>Vajracārya pānju</i> assistants, <i>pānju</i> temple attendant]
<i>Hwama puṣā</i> (fire sacrifice)	14th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/29-30, 83/05/10-11) ⁵ late night to early morning	<i>Pānju puṣārī</i> performs large <i>kalas</i> <i>hwama puṣā</i> in front of Ta Baha temple, and 4 <i>pānjus</i> simultaneously read different sections of the <i>Gunakāraṇḍavvīna</i> . 2 <i>kartas</i> (workers) perform secret <i>puṣā</i> (as in <i>santi āgam kilā puṣā</i>) under a cloth in front of the temple to conclude the rite.
Sacrifice to Yogambara at Santipur	14th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> , (84/04/29-30, 83/05/10-11) late night to early morning	1. <i>Pānju puṣārī</i> blesses goat in front of Ta Baha temple for secret sacrifice at Swayambhu, with <i>jhal/khal pānjus</i> acting as <i>jajmans</i> 2. Procession, including 10 <i>pānjus</i> , circles temple 3 times, then leaves for Swayambhu; goat must follow of own accord. (<i>Jhal/khal pānjus</i> do not go along.) 3. secret sacrifice of goat at shrine to Yogambara near Santipur 4. Secret <i>puṣās</i> performed at Vayupur, Basundhara, Nagpur, and Agnipur.
Simbhu Bhagwan Lasakus puṣā (welcoming)	15th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> (84/05/01) morning	<i>Thakāli pānjuni</i> welcomes the 2 <i>bhaya</i> : <i>pānjus</i> carrying Simbhu Bhagwan upon their return from Swayambhu at the West gate of Ta Baha. <i>Pānju puṣārī</i> officiates at welcoming <i>puṣā</i> .
<i>Daśa karma puṣā</i> (for <i>pānjus</i>)	15th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> (84/05/01) morning	1. Attending <i>pānju</i> returns image to antechamber in front of temple. 2. <i>Jhal/khal pānjus</i> go through <i>daśa karma puṣā</i> with the image, as did <i>Niyekhus</i> , with the <i>Pānju puṣārī</i> officiating, but without <i>Kwapa juju</i> .
<i>Cakra puṣā</i>	15th day of <i>Baiśākh kṛṣṇa</i> (<i>aunsi</i>) (84/05/01) afternoon	1. Kanphata yogi offers piece of large loaf of spice bread to Bunga dya: and to <i>dyā:pala</i> 2. Yogi and yogi assistant perform <i>Cakra puṣā</i> , sacrificing a sheep and buffalo behind Bungadya's Patan temple in Ta Baha. 3. Yogis distribute bread to crowd as <i>prasād</i> .

Diladya Puṇā or Kotwal daha mela	15th day of <i>Baiśākh</i> <i>kr̥ṣṇa</i> through next morning (<i>Mathutirtha</i>) (84/05/01-2, 83/05/12- 13) 1. afternoon of <i>mathutirtha</i> (mother's day-when people go to visit their mothers) 2. late night 3. after sunrise 4-10. morning	1. Procession, including <i>Pāṇju puṇārī</i> , <i>jhal pāṇju</i> , <i>Mālini</i> , <i>suwa:</i> , and G.S. office employee, leaves Bungamati for Kotwal daha. 2. Dhanwar (inhabitants of nearby village) bring goat for sacrifice. 3. <i>Pāṇju puṇārī</i> , aided by <i>suwa:</i> , and <i>jhal pāṇju</i> , performs <i>kalaś</i> <i>puṇā</i> at shrine of Bungadya's "mother" which includes invocation of <i>nāgas</i> . 4. <i>Mālini</i> and <i>jhal pāṇju</i> retrieve "Bungadya" in <i>kalaśes</i> from the waters of the Bagmati in <i>puṇā</i> presided over by <i>Pāṇju puṇārī</i> on the banks of the river. Large crowd gathers, and horns play. 5. The 2 <i>pāṇjus</i> perform Diladya <i>kalaś puṇā</i> . 6. Danuwars perform secret Diladya sacrifice. 7. <i>Pāṇju</i> <i>puṇārī</i> , <i>jhal pāṇju</i> , <i>suwa:</i> , and Danuwar participate in <i>caka: puṇā</i> (circumambulatory <i>puṇā</i>) to various gods. 8. <i>Pāṇjus</i> , <i>Mālini</i> , <i>jātrā jajman</i> , and <i>suwa:</i> end fast with <i>pālan</i> . 9. All participants and friends eat <i>bhwephā</i> (small feast). 10. "Bungadya," in <i>kalaśes</i> carried by <i>jhal pāṇju</i> and <i>Mālini</i> , is brought in procession to Patan along the Bagmati river bed with horns blaring and umbrella sheltering "Bungadya" in <i>kalaśes</i> .
Gākhū Bhairab Puṇā (<i>puṇā</i> offered by rath brakemen)	1st day of <i>Baiśākh śukla:</i> (84/05/02) morning	<i>Gākhūs</i> offer secret <i>puṇā</i> to a pot representing Bhairab in the home of a <i>Gākhū</i> brakemen; secret feast.
Lasakus Puṇā (welcoming) for group returning from Kotwal daha	1st day of <i>Baiśākh śukla:</i> (84/05/02) morning	<i>Thakāli pāṇjuni</i> welcomes <i>Mālini</i> , <i>jātrā</i> <i>jajman</i> , and <i>jhal pāṇju</i> to Ta Baha upon their return from Kotwal. All then circumambulate temple, and <i>Mālini</i> distributes <i>jhal</i> as <i>prasād</i> .
Lhusā and Dhwamā (decorative panels and main beam) installed on the rath, <i>Dhwamā</i> Bhairab Puṇā	1st day of <i>Baiśākh śukla:</i> (84/05/02) afternoon	<i>Bārāhī</i> carpenters complete work on <i>rath</i> and install <i>dhwamā</i> with the help of many children; <i>nāṭke</i> performs simple <i>puṇā</i> to Bhairab image on <i>dhwamā</i> .
Baymwa: Puṇā (cane basketry base for the <i>gajū</i> at the top of the <i>rath</i> spire)	1st day of <i>Baiśākh śukla:</i> (84/05/02) afternoon	<i>Yangwal nāṭke</i> offers simple <i>puṇā</i> to <i>baymwa:</i> and items to be placed in it, then <i>Yangwal</i> place <i>baymwa:</i> on top of <i>rath</i> spire.

Bungaya: (procession)	1st day of <i>Baiśākh śukla</i> : (84/05/02, 83/05/13, 82/04/24) late afternoon (labelled Bunga ya: in astrologers' calendar (<i>patro</i>))	<i>Pānju</i> takes Bungadya out of his temple, and places image in <i>khat</i> , which 8 <i>pānjus</i> in a state of purity carry in procession to <i>rath</i> . They are accompanied by the <i>gurujuya paltan</i> , Patan King's <i>tarbar</i> contingent, 2 <i>pānjus</i> carrying <i>tarbars</i> of Bungadya, the proxy for the Malla King of Bhaktapur with <i>tarbar</i> , <i>gākhus</i> with brakes, <i>suwa</i> : with umbrella, and <i>Pānju pujārī</i> who leads the <i>khat</i> with ceremonial mirror and bell.
Sacrifice to Wheels and brake chocks	1st day of <i>Baiśākh śukla</i> : (84/05/02, 83/05/13, 82/04/24) evening (after god put into <i>rath</i>)	<i>Gākhus</i> perform <i>pujā</i> to wheels, <i>dhwamā</i> Bhairab, and brake blocks, then sacrifice goat to wheels, and receive <i>nau nāga</i> (a piece of sugar cane) as <i>prasād</i>
Sāhit Sālegu (auspicious pulling)	1st day of <i>Baiśākh śukla</i> : (84/05/02, 82/04/24) evening (after <i>Gākhu</i> sacrifice)	<i>Rājopadhyāy se bāje</i> (Newar Brahmin who controls crowd pulling at <i>rath</i>) extends length of <i>pasukā</i> (five- stranded string used in ritual) from god to end of <i>dhwamā</i> and back again, then distributes pieces as <i>prasād</i> .
Rath sālegu (first actual pulling of the <i>rath</i>)	2nd day of <i>Baiśākh śukla</i> : (84/05/03, 83/05/14), early morning after <i>nitya pujā</i> (did not pull <i>rath</i> on this day in 1982, Pulcowk residents revived old custom of pulling on this day in 1983)	Men and women who come for daily morning <i>pujā</i> pull the <i>rath</i> a short distance northward from the site where it was built in Pulcowk to <i>swora khutia pātī</i> where <i>gaidhan pujā</i> is later performed.
Kijā pujā (rice offering)	2nd day of <i>Baiśākh śukla</i> : (84/05/03, 83/05/14) morning	Procession including <i>Pānju pujārī</i> , a <i>Vajrācārya pānju</i> assistant, the <i>jātrā jajman</i> , 2 <i>kartas</i> , and a <i>suwa</i> : leaves Ta Baha to go to <i>rath</i> to perform <i>kalaś pujā</i> with two <i>kalaśes</i> (brought back from Kotwadaha) on <i>rath</i> in front of god. This <i>pujā</i> signifies the end of the <i>daśa karma pujā</i> .

<i>Sāhit sālegu</i> (auspicious pulling)	2nd day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (84/05/03, 83/05/14) approximately noon, though no precise <i>sāhit</i> is determined	<i>Kartas</i> stretch <i>pasukā</i> (string) from <i>Kijā puja</i> to front of <i>dhwamā</i> and back. <i>Pānju</i> then breaks the string and distributes it as <i>prasād</i> ; <i>rath</i> may now be pulled at any time.
<i>Kijā puja Lasakus</i> (welcoming of the rice offering participants)	2nd day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (84/05/03) afternoon	<i>Pānju pujārī</i> and other <i>Kijā puja</i> participants go in a procession from the <i>rath</i> to the <i>jātrā jajman's</i> house, where the <i>jajman's</i> wife welcomes 3 <i>kalāśes</i> carried by <i>jajman</i> , <i>suwa</i> , and <i>karta</i> into the <i>jajman's</i> home, followed by <i>sagun</i> and feast.
<i>Gaidhan puja</i> (the gift of a cow to a Brahmin)	3rd day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (<i>aksyatrītiya</i>) (84/05/04, 83/05/15)	<i>Yela juju</i> , accompanied by his <i>tarbar</i> detachment, offers a cow to <i>Rājopādhyāy</i> at <i>Sworakutta pātī</i> (formerly offered to a Brahmin from <i>Bhaktapur</i>). <i>Rājopādhyāy</i> is both <i>pujārī</i> and recipient.
<i>Sinhamu</i> and <i>jwāñhāykan lhusā</i> (decorative plaques depicting ritual implements) are installed on <i>rath</i>	4th day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : afternoon	<i>Bārāhī</i> install these <i>lhusā</i> plaques on day <i>jātrā</i> officially begins. They should not be placed before this time, and placing them, according to the <i>Bārāhī</i> , allows the <i>rath</i> to go.
<i>Patāha</i> (banner) installed	4th day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (84/05/05, 83/05/16) afternoon (day <i>rath</i> is moved to Ga Baha)	Descendants of <i>Dhobis</i> who donated this silver <i>patāha</i> have a Brahmin perform <i>puja</i> to silver and a cloth <i>patāha</i> before they are put on <i>rath</i> . <i>Yangwal</i> drops a coconut brought by this group from the top of the <i>rath</i> and one of group catches it after banner is placed. Group also presents similar offering to <i>Cakwadya</i> .
<i>Rath</i> spire covered with juniper (<i>La svam bhune wa</i>)	4th day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (83/05/16) afternoon (day <i>rath</i> is moved to Ga Baha)	Group of <i>jyāpus</i> from <i>Bhaghduwal</i> (source of <i>Bagmati</i> river) bring juniper branches which the <i>Yangwals</i> use to cover the <i>rath</i> spire.

<i>Patāha</i> installed	4th day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (84/05/05, 83/05/16) afternoon (day <i>rath</i> is moved to Ga Baha)	<i>Pānju pujārī</i> presides over <i>pujā</i> offered by family of <i>Śākyas</i> (?) from Indracowk, Kathmandu, which presents a brass <i>patāha</i> to the <i>rath</i> every year since it was donated in 1972. They make a similar offering to Cakwadya.
Jewelry placed on image	4th day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (84/05/05, afternoon (day <i>rath</i> is moved to Ga Baha)	<i>Jhal</i> and <i>khal pānjus</i> place jewelry on the image while <i>Guthī Samsthan</i> observer takes inventory.
<i>Rath</i> is pulled; Ga Baha <i>Owelābhu</i> (day of family feast for residents of Ga Baha and vicinity)⁶	4th day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (84/05/05, 83/05/16, 82/04/27) afternoon	After Cakwadya's <i>rath</i> is brought to Pulcowk to "welcome" Bungadya, Bungadya's <i>rath</i> is pulled from Sworakutta <i>pātī</i> to Ga Baha, following Cakwadya. Procession is led by <i>gurujaya paltan</i> and <i>Yela juju's tarbar</i> , along with musicians.
<i>Bhujā</i> offered to Bhairab Ga Baha <i>Bhujā</i> (day of feasts for invited guests and gifts of rice to Bungadya)	5th day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (84/05/06, 83/05/17, 82/04/28)	Group of <i>jyāpus</i> (?) arrive from Chapte, Patan, with <i>dimī bajhan</i> , and place large basket full of cooked rice with inflated intestines of sheep sacrificed to Ganesh in their <i>tol</i> . They do this "to invite <i>Bhagwan</i> , just as one invites a woman to come to her wedding."
<i>Rath</i> is pulled	6th day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (84/05/06, 83/05/17, 82/04/28)	<i>Gurujaya paltan</i> and <i>Yela juju's tarbar</i> procession come to the <i>rath</i> . Normally children attempt to pull the <i>rath</i> this day to no avail, but they often do manage to reposition Cakwadya's <i>rath</i> so that Bungadya can henceforth precede Cakwadya through Patan.
<i>Rath</i> is pulled to Lhu Hiti	7th day of <i>Baisākh śukla</i> : (84/05/07, 83/05/18, 82/04/29)	Usual proceedings for pulling <i>rath</i> . In all three years <i>rath</i> reached desired destination (<i>lagam</i>)
<i>Kumha</i>: Harkhamdya <i>pujā</i>	day <i>rath</i> reaches Lhu Hiti (84/05/07, 83/05/18, 82/04/29)	Potters who make pots for <i>jātrā pujās</i> place mask image of Bhairab (<i>Harkhamdya</i> .) outside their shed at Ta:pha: in U Baha. They share a small feast (<i>samay bajī</i>).

<i>Kumha: jā puṣā</i> (potters' offering of rice)	day after <i>rath</i> reaches Lhu Hiti; (84/05/08) morning	<i>Vajrācārya</i> from Bungamati blesses 6 <i>manas</i> of cooked rice, offered by the <i>Kumha</i> potters who made the pots for the <i>jātrā</i> . <i>Pānjus</i> take the rice to Bungadya, as only they can touch such offerings. All 6 <i>Kumha guṭhīyars</i> come for this rite in Lhu Hiti, though obligation to provide rice rotates among them on a yearly basis.
<i>Bārāhīs' La ki paniṣṭa yaye</i> (blessing of <i>Bārāhī</i> rice offering prior to feast)	day after <i>rath</i> reaches Lhu Hiti; morning, feast in afternoon; (84/05/08)	<i>Pānju puṣārī</i> performs <i>hwama puṣā</i> in Lhu Hitti, on behalf of the <i>Bārāhī thakāli</i> , as part of an offering made to Bungadya. The feast which follows is shared by the 2 <i>pānju puṣāris</i> , all 24 <i>Bārāhīs</i> , and the <i>jyāpus</i> who work for them.
<i>Chempanta Śanti puṣā</i>	day after <i>rath</i> reaches Lhu Hiti; (84/05/08) afternoon	<i>Pānjus</i> perform secret <i>puṣā</i> with the <i>suwas</i> in house used by <i>pānjus</i> in Pore tci during the <i>jātrā</i> . All <i>pānjus</i> are supposed to come.
<i>Gākhu</i> feast with Harkhamdya	day after <i>rath</i> reaches Lhu Hiti; (84/05/08) afternoon	The 4 <i>gakhu</i> brakemen eat a secret feast with <i>Harkham dya</i> : (Bhairab mask). Image used to be displayed on a platform when <i>rath</i> arrived at Lhu hiti, and <i>bhwe</i> was eaten on the platform under a cloth cover.
<i>Bhuṣā</i> (offering of rice sculptures)	day after <i>rath</i> reaches Lhu Hiti; (84/05/08) night	Members of a 20-member <i>jyāpu guṭhī</i> from Ta Nani, Salinche, Ca Baha, and Nag Baha areas in Patan sculpt <i>cībā</i> : and other figures out of rice in Nag Baha, then carry the sculptures in procession, accompanied by a <i>dimi bajhan</i> , to Lhu Hitti where they break up the sculptures and place the rice on the <i>dhwamā</i> : Bhairabs of the two <i>raths</i> and the and wheels of Bungadya's <i>rath</i> . <i>Vajrācāryas</i> used to sculpt the figures, but stopped in 1977. Sculptors have secret feast after presenting offerings in Lhu hiti.
<i>Rath sālegu</i> (pull <i>rath</i> toward Lagankhel)	two days after <i>rath</i> reaches Lhu Hiti; afternoon; (84/05/09) <i>rath</i> reached Lagankhel: (82/05/02, 83/05/21, 84/05/14)	<i>Rath</i> is theoretically supposed to reach Lagankhel this day, though it rarely does, often stopping near U Baha due to difficulties in pulling it down the narrow lane between U Baha and Lhu hiti.

Sacrifices at Kotwal daha, Hayagriha (Bungamati), and near Swayambhu	day after <i>rath</i> reaches Lagankhel; late night (84/05/15)	Four <i>pānjus</i> and 4 <i>suwa:s</i> go to each site. Sacrifices near Swayambhu and Kotwal daha are secret; <i>pānjus</i> cannot see them. The <i>pujās</i> performed resemble the <i>bhujā puja</i> given before <i>daśa karma puja</i> in Ta Baha. Goats offered at Kotwal and "Swayambhu" must be black and castrated.
<i>Mahā bali cā puja</i> (night ritual prior to large sacrifice)	day after <i>rath</i> reaches Lagankhel; evening (84/05/15)	<i>Pānju pujārī</i> and <i>Vajracārya</i> who performs <i>mahā bali</i> perform <i>puja</i> in Mulcowk to prepare goat for sacrifice. The goat is then led in a procession with the <i>māhām</i> , Patan Malla King descendent carrying <i>tarbar</i> , umbrella, and <i>kusle bajhan</i> to Lagankhel where <i>kalaś puja</i> is performed in front of the <i>rath</i> while the goat is sacrificed at Maju Sima. The Patan Malla King descendant is the <i>jajman</i> for both the sacrifice and the <i>rath puja</i> .
<i>Mahā Bali</i> (largest sacrifice)	day after <i>rath</i> reaches Lagankhel (into next morning); ideally should start late at night and be finished by sunrise so that the public cannot view (84/05/16, 83/05/23, 82/05/04) (always started in early a.m.)	Two goats, 2 sheep, and 2 buffaloes are sacrificed in front of the <i>rath</i> for the <i>bhūtas</i> and <i>pretas</i> (malevolent spirits) which accompanied Bungadya from Kamarup. Parts of the sacrificial animals are not eaten, but disposed of in <i>cwāsa</i> by <i>Pore</i> porters. The <i>Pānju pujārī</i> and <i>Vajracārya mahā bali</i> sacrifice specialist offer a <i>hwama puja</i> in conjunction with the sacrifices, over which they also officiate. Two <i>suwa:s</i> sacrifice the goats and sheep, two butchers sacrifice the buffaloes. Five additional <i>pānjus</i> assist with the rituals, for all of which the Patan Malla descendant (<i>Yela juju</i>), holding the <i>tarbar</i> , serves as <i>jajman</i> . [<i>Sākya dhamaru</i> player also assists]
<i>Gākhu bali</i> (sacrifice offered by <i>rath</i> brakemen)	immediately after <i>Mahā Bali</i> (84/05/16, 83/05/23, 82/05/04) morning	<i>Gākhus</i> offer a buffalo and sheep to <i>rath</i> wheels as a sacrifice to the four Bhairabs they represent, with the <i>thakālī</i> acting as <i>pujārī</i> .
<i>Kwena bhwe</i> (final feast)	2 days after <i>rath</i> reaches Lagankhel (day <i>mahābali</i> is completed) (84/05/16) morning	Five <i>pānjus</i> go to Jalabinayek (Ganesh temple near Cobar, often worshiped in final, or <i>kwena, pujās</i>), and have feast; they do not offer additional sacrifice there.
Bungamati sacrifice	day <i>mahā bali</i> is completed) (84/05/16) night	Two <i>Vajracārya pānjus</i> go to Bungamati to perform secret sacrifice.

<i>Rath sālegu</i> (rath pulled)	Day <i>mahābali</i> is completed; (84/05/16, 83/05/23, 82/05/04)	<i>Rath</i> is pulled twice around Maju sima, then on towards Pore tol.
<i>Cwelā bhu</i> (family feast) Harkhamdya display (Bhairab masks)	evening of day <i>rath</i> pulled from Lagankhel (84/05/16, 83/05/23, 82/05/04)	Families in area celebrate with <i>cwelā</i> feast. A <i>Rājkarṇikar guthī</i> , <i>Śākya guthī</i> , and one family, display large Bhairab masks (<i>Harkhamdyā</i>) on the street from Lagankhel to Mangal bajar.
Maju sima <i>bai</i> (sacrifice to Bungadya's "mother")	day <i>rath</i> is pulled from Lagankhel (<i>cwelā bhu</i>) (84/05/16, 83/05/23, 82/05/04) night	<i>Yele juju</i> , carrying <i>tarbar</i> , goes to Maju sima in a procession from Mulcowk. A <i>Vajracārya pānju</i> (not the <i>Pānju puṣārī</i>) performs a <i>puṣā</i> to the middle god of the 3 principal deities in the Maju sima shrine, then a sheep is sacrificed there. All of the <i>tutta bajhans</i> who visit the <i>rath</i> each night circumambulate Maju sima as well as the <i>rath</i> on this night.
<i>Bhujā puṣā</i> (rice offering)	day after <i>rath</i> is pulled from Lagankhel (84/05/17, 83/05/24, 82/05/05) afternoon	Many offerings of rice, potatoes, and <i>patāhas</i> , are made by groups from those <i>tois</i> for whom this is <i>bhujā</i> . These groups then form a procession from <i>rath</i> to Mangal bajar. In 1984, 25 <i>jyāpu dhimay bajhans</i> including over 240 men processed to Mangal bajar, where women dressed in finery were waiting to observe their dancing and musicianship.
Coconut dropping	day after <i>rath</i> is pulled from Lagankhel (84/05/17, 83/05/24, 82/05/05) late afternoon	Patan <i>Kumārī</i> comes to Pore tol. <i>Yangwal</i> drops coconut, first from the top of Bungadya's <i>rath</i> , then from Cakwadya's <i>rath</i> , to a large crowd of men gathered below to catch them. Buses bring people from outlying villages for this event.
Time for final <i>sāhit swāyegu</i> determined		<i>Bārāhīs</i> determine the date for calculating the <i>sāhit</i> for the final leg of the <i>jātrā</i> at their feast.
<i>Yāka: misā jātrā</i> (‘lone woman’ <i>rath</i> pulling; commemorates mythical event)	day after <i>bhujā</i> , (delayed in 1984 due to broken wheel): (84/05/23, 83/05/25, 82/05/06)	Women gather to pull the <i>rath</i> a short distance to the Pore tol intersection after the daily <i>nitya puṣā</i> . <i>Yela jujuya tarbar</i> and regular <i>rath</i> pulling personnel come for this event.
<i>Sāhit swāyegu</i> (determination of auspicious moment for pulling <i>rath</i>)	early morning; timing determined at <i>Bārāhī</i> feast on night of Pore tol coconut dropping, (84/05/31, 83/06/02)	Four <i>pengu thay Joṣīs</i> meet in the morning at Bhimsenthan, Mangal bajar as before (see first entry) to consult calendars and determine <i>sāhit</i> for pulling <i>rath</i> to Jawalakhel.

Bārāhī Digudya: Puja
(clan deity worship;
Bārāhīs perform this
on behalf of
Bungadya as well as
themselves as they
say they share the
same *digu dyā*.)

day of *sāhit swayegu*
(84/05/31, 83/06/02)
afternoon

18 *Bārāhī guthīyars* perform *digu dyā*:
pujā, with *Vajracārya* officiating and
thakāli and *noko* as principal *jajmans*,
at Purnacandi. A *kalaś puja* and
sacrifice is offered to Purnacandi and
Bhairab, followed by each *Bārāhī*
guthīyar, having shaved their head,
performing individual *pujās* to
Purnacandi. All *guthīyars* then eat
secret *samay*.

Diladya puja
(note that this *puja*
comes much later in
sequence of the
shorter *jātrā* of 1983
after Bungadya:
had returned to
Bungamati; (not
observed in 1982)

15th day of *Asad kṛṣṇa*
through 1st day of *Asad*
śukla: (84/06/29-30,
83/07/10-11) *puja*
begins early morning of
the second day

Earlier *Diladya puja* at Kotwal daha is
repeated, primarily propitiating gods
from Kamanup; *pujās* began 4:05am
on Dilaparu

1. invocation of *nāga* king 2. *kalaś*
puja to mother of Bungadya 3. *nāga*
sādhana from river to *kalaś* 4.
retrieval of Bungadya from river 5.
Diladya kalaś puja, sing from
Gunakāraṇḍavha 6. *bhog* feast 7.
secret *Diladya*: sacrifice 8. *ca puja* to
8 gods in vicinity 9. *samay* 10. *Mālini*,
Suvar, and *Pānjus* break fast with
palan. 11. procession to Bungamati 12.
Thakāli pānjuni offers *lasakus*
(welcome) *puja* at Bungamati 13. feast

Kipu jyāpuni yā
(festival honoring
jyāpuni lover of
Bungadya from
Kirtipur)

3 days prior to pulling
rath to Jawalakhel
(84/08/20, 83/06/10)
morning

Jhal *pānju*, assisted by the *bhaya*:
pānjus, offers *prasād* from Bungadya
to a descendant of the *jyāpuni* who
slept with Bungadya during a *rath*
jātrā long ago. The *jyāpuni* accepts
the *prasād*, careful not to touch the
pānju, then takes it home, returning
with offerings of food. Other women
from Kirtipur follow suit. *Śākyas* from
Cakwadya baha *saṃgha* also offer
prasād to women, but women make
no effort to avoid touching them.

Kapu cyāyeke
(camphor burning)

2 days before pulling
rath to Jawalakhel,
evening, (84/08/21,
83/06/11)

G. *saṃsthan* personnel place five pots
of burning camphor on the corners of
the *rath khajula* and *dhwamā*, and one
on the *dhwamā* of Cakwadya's *rath*,
then they go to Maju sima.

Maju sima bali (sacrifice to Bungadya's mother)	2 days before pulling rath to Jawalakhel, (84/08/21, 83/06/11, 82/05/25) evening	The group that brought <i>kapu</i> to the <i>rath</i> sacrifices a goat to the middle deity of the three principle deities in the Maju sima shrine. The <i>ḡyāpu</i> proxy for the <i>Yela juju</i> performs the sacrifice. After the sacrifice they eat <i>samay</i> at Maju sima.
Bhuḡā puḡā (cooked rice offerings)	night before pulling rath to Jawalakhel, (84/08/22, 83/06/12, 82/05/25)	2 intricate rice sculptures are made in Mulcowk, carried to the <i>raths</i> in procession, and placed on the <i>dhvamās</i> amidst rice fight as sculptures are destroyed. One <i>Tandukar</i> fetches water, 8 <i>suwars</i> cook the rice, 5 <i>Sākyas</i> sculpt figures, 6 <i>ḡyāpus</i> carry the sculptures, 5 <i>kusleplay</i> instruments, and the <i>tarbar</i> contingent escorts the sculpture procession on its way to the <i>rath</i> .
Naimkya: Kwerkegu (coconut dropping)	night before pulling rath to Jawalakhel, (84/08/22, 83/06/12, 82/05/25)	2 <i>Yangwals</i> drop coconuts from the top of Cakwadya and Bungadya's <i>raths</i> to crowd waiting below. <i>Yela juju</i> and the <i>tarbar</i> contingent are seated on the <i>rath</i> .
Sāhit Sālegu (pulling rath at auspicious moment)	determined by astrologers each year (see <i>Sāhit swayegu</i>) (84/08/23, 83/06/13)	The <i>jātrā jajman</i> starts a water clock at sunrise to determine precise <i>sāhit</i> for moving the <i>rath</i> . At the <i>sāhit</i> moment, pieces of <i>pasukā</i> (string) are thrown from the <i>rath</i> to waiting crowd who struggle to break string into pieces, pulling them apart in small 'tug of wars.'
Rath sālegu (rath pulling)	determined by astrologers each year (see <i>Sāhit swāyegu</i>) (84/08/23-24, 83/06/13 82/05/27) afternoon	<i>Rath</i> is pulled from Pore tol to Jawalakhel with usual contingent and ceremonies. (note: in 1984 the <i>dhvamā</i> of Bungadya's <i>rath</i> broke, thus delaying subsequent events by one day.)
Bale puḡā (parting rite)	2 days after rath is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/26) late morning	2 <i>Vajrācāryas</i> from Hyena baha, who usually perform <i>puḡās</i> on behalf of Cakwadya baha <i>saṃgha</i> members, perform <i>Kalaś puḡā</i> on behalf of Cakwadya to honor Bungadya and bid him farewell.
Chyaskamuni puḡā (worship of deity which resides under rath)	2 days after rath is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/26) afternoon	<i>Guthī Samsthan</i> workers offer simple <i>puḡā</i> to Chyaskamuni, then eat feast.

<i>Panju's bau pha</i> (rice offerings to <i>pānjus</i>)	2 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/26) morning through early afternoon	<i>Pānjus</i> spread cloths in a line near <i>rath</i> for devotees to make offerings of rice to all the <i>pānjus</i> , including those who are not present.
Rice sculpture preparation	2 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/26, 83/06/15, 82/05/29) afternoon and evening	4 intricate rice sculptures with 84 kinds of food decorating them are made next to the Pulcowk <i>stūpa</i> . <i>Jyāpu</i> from Pulcowk cooks rice, <i>Maleku guthī</i> provides rice, 1 <i>Vajrācārya</i> from Bu baha sculpts figures with a <i>jyāpu</i> assistant.
<i>Naki bhu</i> (feast for the <i>pānjus</i> wives)	2 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/26, 83/06/15, 82/05/29) night	Wives of the <i>pānjus</i> are escorted by <i>pānjus</i> to the <i>rath</i> where they smell the smoke of burning incense, are given a <i>tika</i> , and fall into trance. <i>Pānjus</i> lead them from the <i>rath</i> to the <i>pujā</i> site, where a <i>Vajrācārya pānju</i> , takes them out of trance, and then puts them back into trance and out again 3 more times as part of complex <i>pujā</i> presided over by the <i>Pānju pujārī</i> . During the course of the ritual, devotees make offerings to the line of <i>naki</i> as they trance.
<i>Gākhu</i> sacrifice	2 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/26, 83/06/15, 82/05/29) night	During the <i>naki bhu</i> , <i>Gākhus</i> sacrifice a goat to the wheels of the <i>rath</i> then immediately prepare it for <i>sī kā: bhu</i> as a part of the <i>naki bhu</i> . The <i>Gākhu</i> <i>thakāli</i> is the <i>pujārī</i> for the sacrifice which is performed by other <i>Gākhus</i> .
Rice sculpture procession and offering to gods	2 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/26, 83/06/15, 82/05/29) night	4 rice sculptures are carried from Pulcowk to Jawalakhel in procession with band and <i>tarbar</i> group. Young <i>Śākya</i> men and boys carry 3 of the sculptures, but the one for Bungadya is carried by <i>jyāpus</i> . As they circle the <i>rath</i> 3 times, the rice sculptures swing wildly through crowd, and on- lookers snatch rice from the sculptures and hurl it at one another. The sculpture bearers offer what remains of the sculptures to <i>rath</i> <i>dhwamās</i> . <i>Ḍhairabs</i> .
<i>Naki bhu sī kā: bhwe</i> (feast of the sacrificed goat's head for the <i>pānjus</i> wives)	2 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/26, 83/06/15, 82/05/29) night	At the end of the <i>naki bhu pujā</i> , the <i>Gākhus</i> bring the cooked and quartered head of the goat they sacrificed for the <i>naki bhu pujā</i> participants.

Jawalakhel <i>Bhujā</i>	2 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/26, 83/06/15, 82/05/29)	During the day, many <i>pujās</i> are performed by families from all over the valley in Jawalakhel. At night many men conduct an all night vigil, burning <i>mahādip</i> torches and drinking and singing songs.
Offerings to <i>Gākhus</i>	3 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/27, 83/06/16)	This day the <i>Gākhus</i> are entitled to all offerings made to Chyaskamuni beneath the <i>rath</i> , and a <i>gākhu</i> positions himself beneath the <i>rath</i> or nearby to receive offerings.
Sacrifice to Hayagriba Bhairab	3 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/27) morning	The Patan Mallā King's <i>tarbar</i> is taken in procession to Bungamati to offer sacrifice at which the <i>tarbar</i> bearer is the <i>fajman</i> .
<i>Bhoto kene khunhu</i> (day of showing the "shirt") general description	3 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/27, 83/06/16, 82/05/29)	Many <i>dhinay bajhans</i> (<i>jyāpu</i> drum bands) come from all over the valley, those who have come every day during the <i>jātrā</i> often have feast. Several people often come to burn lamps on their bodies (<i>mhe matta cyāyekegu</i>) on this day as personal offerings.
<i>Bhoto kenegu</i> (showing of the "shirt")	3 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel afternoon, (84/08/27, 83/06/16, 82/05/29)	Thousands from all over the valley come to witness the most famous part of the festival when the King pays his respects to Bungadya. 1. King, Queen, ministers and top govt. officials arrive at Jawalakhel, the center of which has been cleared of spectators in honor of the King. 2. The attendants to Bungadya and Cakwadya and <i>Kumārī</i> offer <i>prasād</i> to the King, who returns offerings. The <i>subba</i> , standing on the <i>rath</i> , shows the King and public the <i>bhoto</i> , circling <i>khajula</i> of <i>rath</i> 3 times, displaying the <i>bhoto</i> in the 8 directions. 3. The King and Queen come forward to offer coins to Bungadya, then leave.
Procession to Bungamati God placed in temple	3 days after <i>rath</i> is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/27, 83/06/16, 82/05/29)	The <i>pānjus</i> remove the god from <i>rath</i> , place in <i>khat</i> , and return to Bungamati in a torch lit procession, escorted by the <i>gurujaya paltan</i> .

Dropping of the <i>baymwa:</i> from rath	3 days after rath is pulled to Jawalakhel (84/08/27) evening	2 <i>Yangwals</i> drop the <i>baymwa:</i> from the top of the <i>rath</i> and several hundred spectators stay to observe how it falls; upright fortells poor rainfall
<i>Bijyays puja</i> (welcoming worship)	3 days after <i>Bhoto ken:gu</i> , all day from early morning through (84/08/30, 83/06/19, 82/06/02) evening	Thousands of people come to see that Bungadya has returned safely to his Bungamati temple. In 1984, over 6,000 people received <i>darśan</i> from Bungadya in 4 hours in the morning. <i>Sannhuguthīs</i> , <i>guthīs</i> which worship Bungadya on <i>sannhu</i> (first day of each solar month) come this day from all over to have feast.
Sacrifice to Hayagriba		Sacrifice is offered to Hayagriba with <i>subba</i> holding <i>tarbar</i> and acting as <i>jajman</i> . The <i>samay</i> and feast which follow in Amarapur are for <i>Guthī Samsthan</i> employees, key <i>pānjus</i> , and friends.
<i>De bhu</i> (feast for people of Bungamati)	84/09/14	Feast is held for the entire village of Bungamati which a representative from each family in Bungamati is to attend.
<i>Kwena puja</i> (final <i>puja</i>)	83/07/08 (not observed in 1984)	The <i>Pānju pujārī</i> , with the <i>jātrā jajman</i> , presides over a buffalo sacrifice offered to Ganesh at Jawalakhel, marking the end of the <i>jātrā</i> .

1. The *pānju pujārī* is the *Vājrācarya pānju* who assumes the responsibility for performing the major *pujās* during the *jātrā*, usually by turn for the year.

2. The *jātrā jajman* is the principal *jajman* of all the major *pujās* in the *jātrā*. There are now two such *jajmans*, both *Śreṣṭhas* from Patan, who assume this role in alternate years.

3. "Bunge" is the Newari shortened form of Bungamati.

4. *Pānju pujārī*

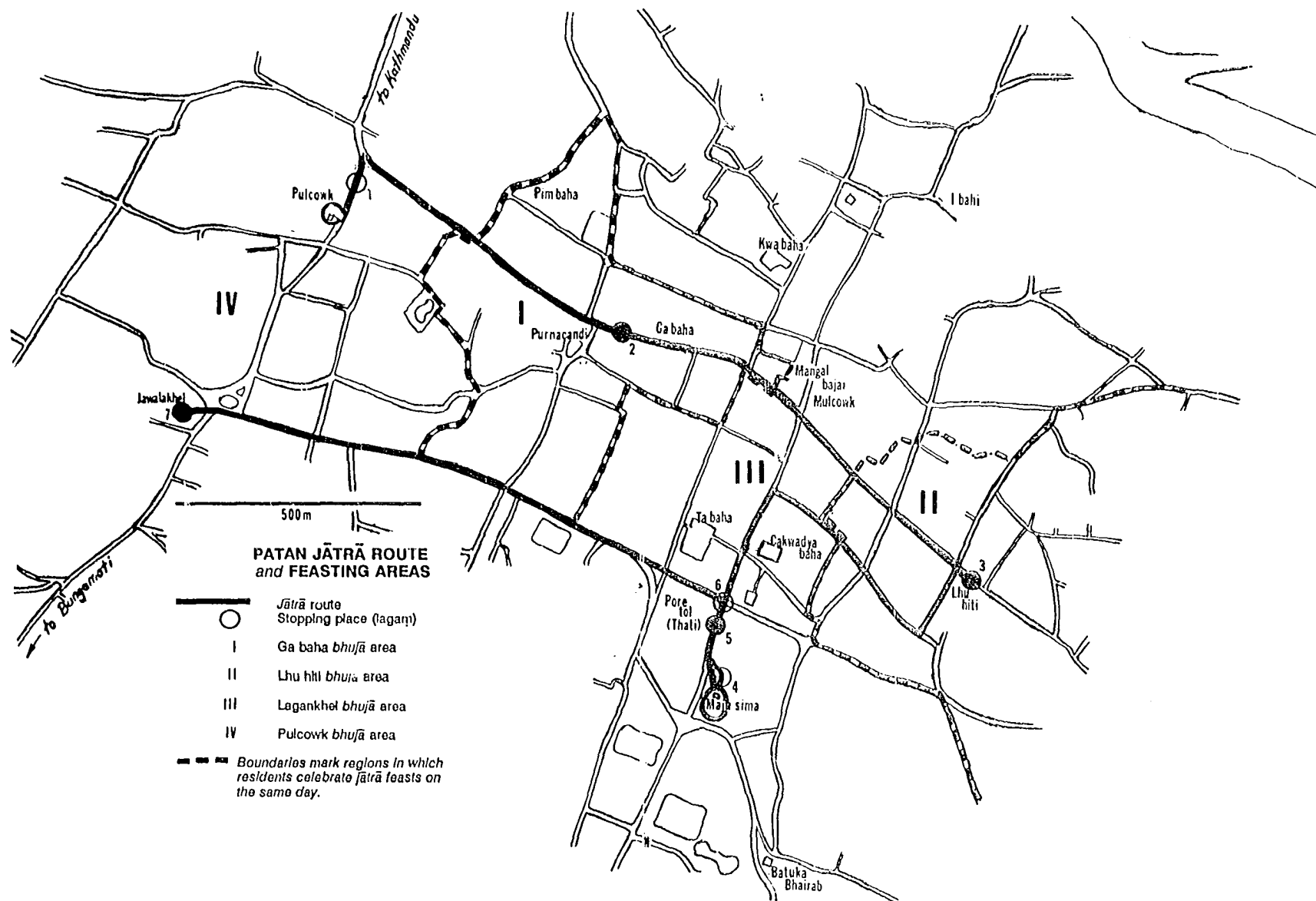
5. Though the Newar would refer to this event as occurring on the 13th day of *Baiśakh Kṛṣṇa* (84/04/29), it in fact starts after midnight in the early hours of 84/04/30, hence the designation 84/04/29-30.

6. *Cwelābhu* and *Bhujā* are celebrated on the day the *rath* reaches its prescribed destination (*agam*) and the day after, respectively. These *agam* are in Ga Bahal, Lhu Hitti (Nhugha), Lagankhel, and Jawalakhel.

APPENDIX B: Map of Patan *Jātrā* Route and Feasting Areas

This map depicts the route of the *jātrā* within Patan, including the various official stopping points. It also shows how Patan is divided with respect to observances connected with the *rath* reaching an intended stopping point within the city. The *cwelā bhu* and *bhujā* feasts are timed in each neighborhood in accordance with the *rath* reaching a particular point. The boundaries indicated separate different areas within Patan not only with respect to the timing of their feasting celebrations, but with respect to their participation in pulling the *rath*, for people tend to participate in pulling the *rath toward* the location identified with *their* feast day. It also separates, to some degree, *bhujā* hosts from guests, for those celebrating *bhujā* primarily play the role of host to those who are not.

Some families who have recently moved (i.e. within the past generation) continue to observe the feast day that they celebrated while living in their former neighborhood. Areas which have only recently become densely populated, such as the region south of the southern road leading from Lagankhel to Jawalakhel, are less clearly defined as belonging to one or another of the feasting areas.



PLATES

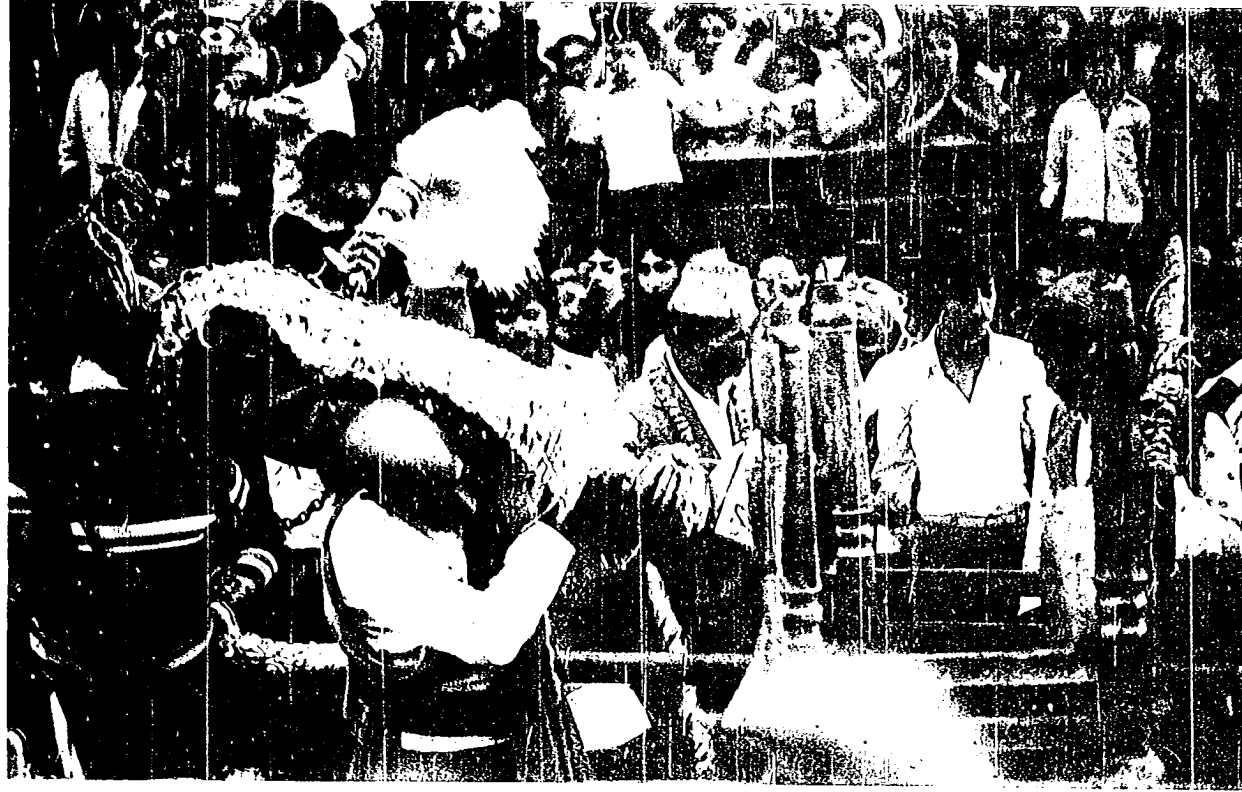
The following plates have been included in order to provide photographic evidence of several features of the *jātrā* of particular importance to issues discussed in the text, and to illustrate aspects of the *jātrā* which are points of controversy in the ethnographic record. The photographs were all taken by the author.



Niyekhus painting the image of Bungadya
Ta Baha, Patan, 1983



Retrieving Bungadya from the river at Koduwa gorge.
from left (foreground) to right (rear): *Pānju pujārī*,
Mālini, *Jhal Pānju*, and *Suwā*:
Koduwa, 1983



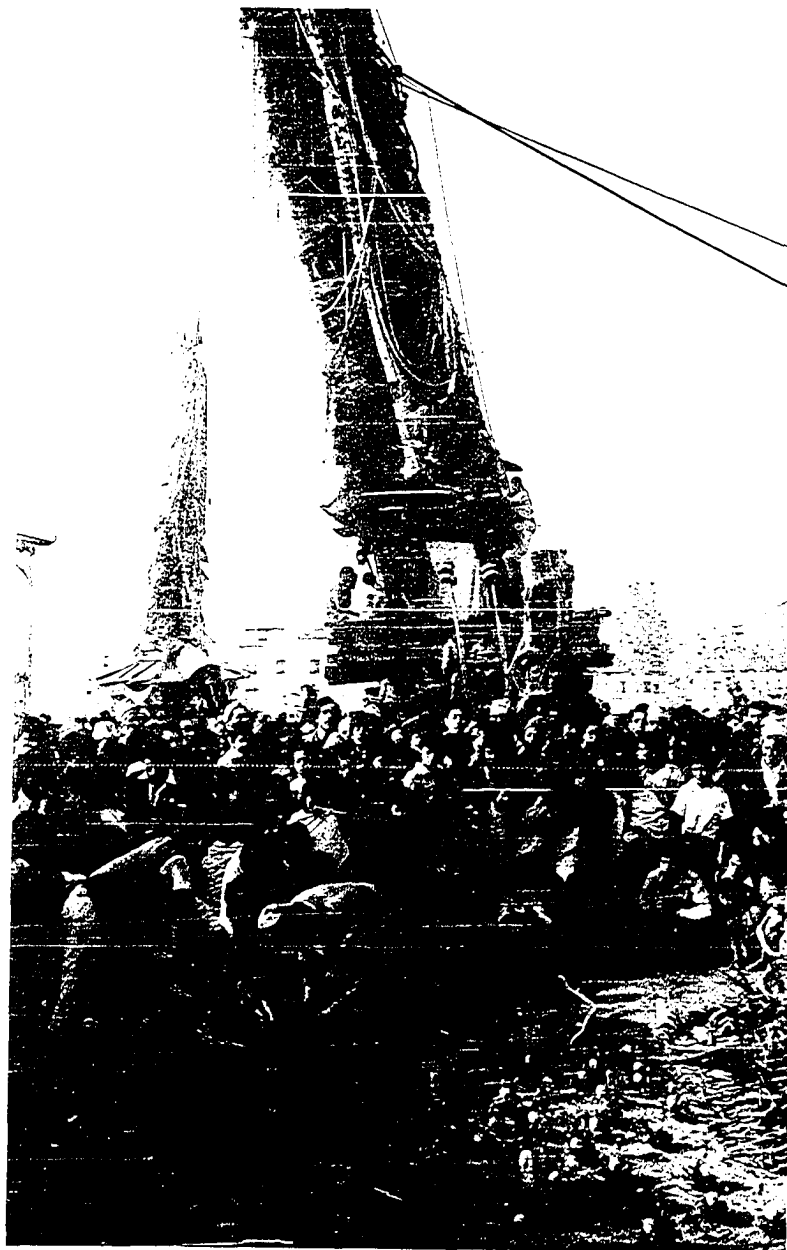
Pānju placing Bungadya in palinquin in which
god will be taken to the *rath* on *Bungayā*:
Ta Baha, Patan, 1983



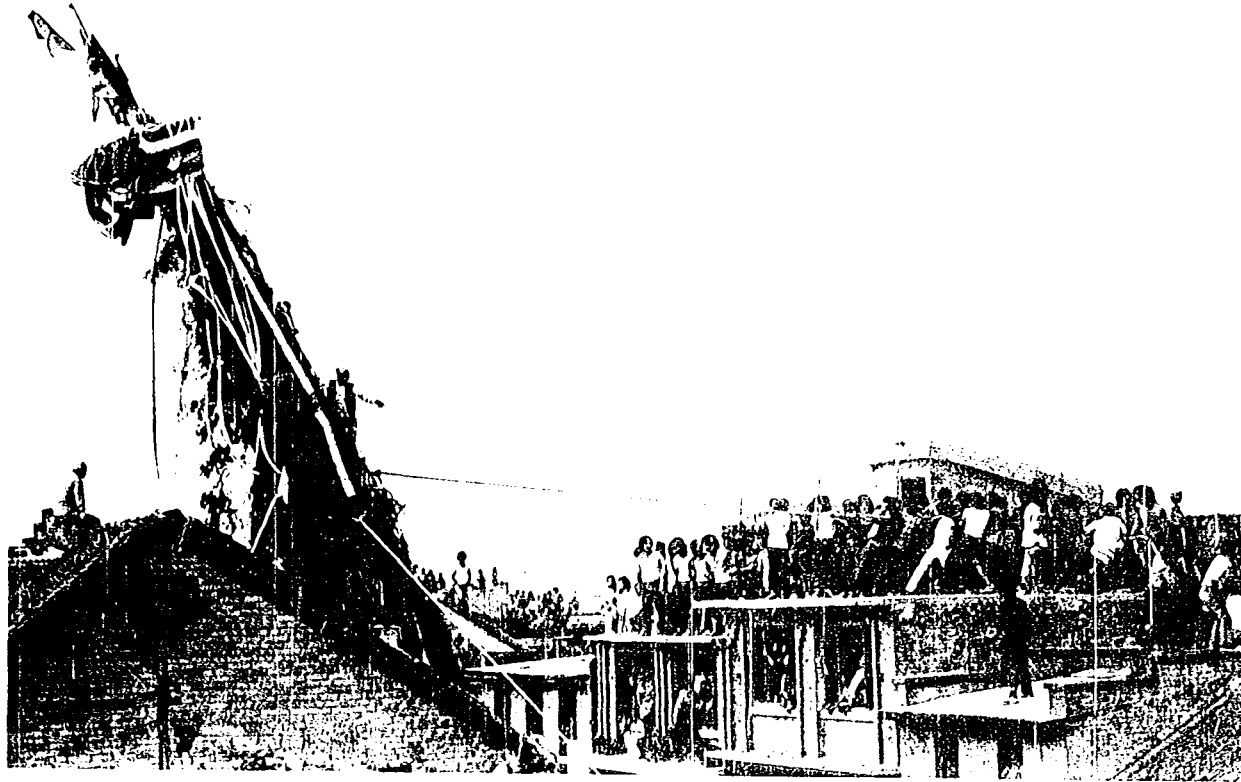
Bārāhī performing *digu dyā: puja* on behalf
of themselves and Bungadya
Purnacandi, Patan, 1983



Jhal pānju offering *prasād* to the descendant of *Kipu Jyāpuni*, the farmer-woman from Kirtipur with whom Bungadya is said to have trysted during a *rath jātrā* long ago. Kirtipur, 1983



Mahā bali being performed in front of Bungadya's *rath*
in Lagankhel. Note cloth being held up to shield Bungadya
from seeing bloodshed
Patan, 1984



Pulling on the *jangala* ropes from the rooftops.
Note the *Yangwal* perched on the *rath* spire, directing
the *jangala* pullers. Thaine, Patan, 1982



Bungadya during the *daśa karma puṣā* performed with the *Niyekhus*. Note the robe as worn by the *pānjus*, and the paper ornaments as worn by girls undergoing *ihi puṣā*. Ta Baha, Patan, 1983



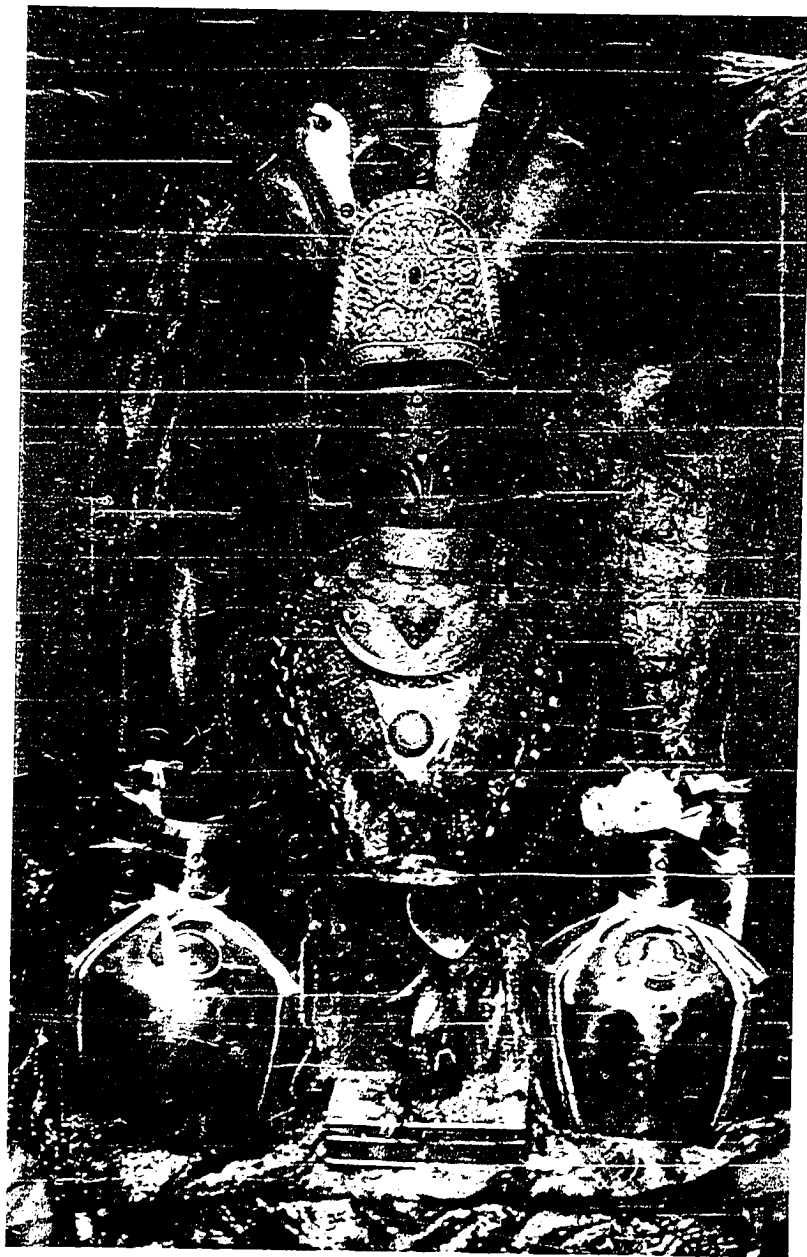
*Jyāpu "hoste" leader at the front of the rath
dhwamā. Note Rājopādhyay in the white at rear.
Pulcowk, Patan, 1982*



Hayagriba Bhairab image and Śākya attendant
Bungamati, 1934



Cakwadya after the completion of the *daśa karma puṣā*
Cakwadya Baha, Patan, 1983



Silver urn (*Barmha kwam*) containing the "life" of Bungadya, surrounded by smaller urns, seated in the sanctum of Ta Baha temple while the image is being painted. Patan, 1984

GLOSSARY

The majority of foreign words which appear more than once in the body of the text are included in the following glossary. Unless otherwise indicated, all words are Newari or have been adopted by Newars to the extent that strictly Newari synonyms are obscure or non-existent. The meanings given are those commonly intended by Newar speakers, and may not be consistent with the meanings of the Sanskrit terms from which the Newari terms may derive. The spelling of Newar words in devanagari script are not standardized in Newari publications, and the spellings used here are based on the only substantial Newari-Newari dictionary currently available (Joshi:1987) unless a different standardized romanized spelling has been widely adopted in the literature (such as *Śiva* for *Śiva*, and *Vishnu* for *Viṣṇu*). The romanization of devanagari script follows the widely used convention adopted by the *Journal of Asian Studies*.

For the sake of clarity, for some words used widely in the South Asian literature, conventional spellings based on Sanskrit have been retained instead of their Newari equivalents. Hence I have rendered the term for the sponsor of a *pujā* as *jajman*, rather than *jaymam*; and written Ganesh rather than *Ganay dyā*: for Shiva's elephant-headed son. With relatively rare exceptions, *व* (normally romanized as "v") is in Newari pronounced as "wa," unless it is an initial phoneme, in which case it is usually pronounced as "ba." Therefore, non-initial *व*'s are here rendered as "w"s in Newar words in order to more accurately convey the pronunciation of the word. The semicolon, or *visarga*, is used in Newari to indicate a lengthened vowel. When Sanskrit, or Sanskrit-derived words are often used as an alternative to their Newari equivalents, I have used them in the text, also for the sake of clarity.

Each entry begins with the word as rendered in the text, followed by a designation of language if other than Newari, which is followed by a roman transcription of the devanagari spelling if it differs from the word as rendered in the text. The Newari equivalent of Nepali and Sanskrit words used in the text is also provided in this glossary.

GLOSSARY

āgam - shrine into which only initiated members are allowed (every *bāhā*: has an *āgam* into which only initiated *saṃgha* members are allowed); any shrine to a personal tutelary deity, particularly shrines in homes

āgam dyā: - the god housed in an *āgam*

Agni - the god of fire

ahimsa - the principle of non-violence

Ajima (*Ajīmā*) - fierce tantric goddess; especially Harati ajima, goddess associated with smallpox and other childhood diseases

aksyatrītyā (Skt.) - the third day of the bright half of *Baiśākḥ* the first day of the *Satya yuga*, "...secures permanency of actions then performed" (Monier-Williams 1963:3)

Amarapur - the square in which the temple of Bungadya is located in Bungamati, also known as Bungabaha

āraṭī - a candle-labra like lamp in which clarified butter, or *ghi*, is burned

Assan tol - the center of trade in Kathmandu

Avalokiteśvara - "the lord which sees in all directions", the pre-eminent Bodhisattva of this age (the *Kali yuga*), popularly considered to have 108 incarnations

aylā: - distilled rice spirits

bāhā: - temple compound containing the *āgam dyā*: and *kwāpā dyā*: of a *saṃgha* including *Vajrācārya* and/or *Sākya* members

bahī - temple compound, similar to *bāhā*, though often architecturally distinct, and only including *Sākya* within its *saṃgha*

bāhun - Brahmin

baji - flattened par-boiled rice, the preeminent feast food

Bandhudatta - the priest who accompanied Narendradeva and Lalita Jyapu on their quest for Bungadya/Matsyendranath

bā:phukī - those who were originally members of one's *phukī*, or lineage god worship group, but are no longer, having split off and started worshipping independently

Bārāhī - a clan of carpenters who play a major role in building the chariot of Bungadya

bare - term used to designate high caste Newar Buddhists (*Vajrācārya* and *Sākya* though more frequently the latter)

barupa - "two-formed," particularly of deities comprised of both male and female aspects

Bauddhamārgī - "one on the path of (i.e. follower of) the Buddha," "Buddhist"

baymwa: - a basket-like woven cane and wood structure at the very top of the *rath* spire, resembling a crow's-nest on a sailing vessel; more general, the lotus-shaped base of a *gajū*, or pinnacle of a temple

bel fruit - *Aegle marmelos*, used as symbolic groom in ritual marriage of young girls

bhāi (Nep.) - younger brother (*kijā*, Nw.)

Bhairab - fierce incarnation of Shiva

Bhairav - (see Bhairab)

bhajan - a musical group; music

Bhimdya - (*Bhimdyā:*) Bhimsen, the strongest of the Pandava brothers as portrayed in the Mahabharatagod; associated with trade and strength,

Bhimsen - (see Bhimdya)

bhoto - vest-like garment, as worn by Bungadya

bhoto kenegu - the display of Bungadya's *bhoto* at the final ceremony of the *jātrā* in Patan

bhu - feast

bhujā - feast of cooked rice

bhwe - feast

bija - honorific welcome, greeting (abbreviated form of *bijyāye*)

Bodhicitta - the perfected mind, wisdom; the prepared mind

Bodhisattva - one who has achieved release from the cycle of perpetual rebirth but who elects to remain on earth to aid others in achieving enlightenment

Bungepim - residents of Bungamati

bwasi - woodcutter

caitya - *stūpā*; a dome-shaped shrine favored by Buddhists, often used as reliquary

Cakwadya (*Cakwadya*.) - *Jatādhāri Lokeśwar* of Patan, also known as *Minnāth*

catamāri - sweet-filled bread

cathare - "four *thars*", an isogamous group of several *Śreṣṭhā thars*

• *chetri* (Nep.) - Hindu *Parbatīyā* caste, second in status to Brahmins; derived from *ksatriya* (Skt.), or warrior *varṇa*

chwāsa - disposal place for ritually impure items

Citrakār (Nep.) - painter *jāt*, (*Pum*, Nw.)

cībā: - see *caitya*

cwelā - meat dish, often served at feasts

cyāyekegu - to burn

darbar (Nep.) - palace, (*layeku*, Nw.)

darśan (Skt.) - to view, as in viewing a god in worship

daśa karma pujā - series of life-cycle rites

dekhā - initiation

dewa - lamp

dharma - law; also, virtuous act, morally or doctrinally prescribed action

dhobi - washerman

dholak - drum

dhwamā - long central beam of processional chariots which functions as a yoke

digu dyā: - "clan" deity; deity honored collectively by lineage group (*phukī*)

Dipankara Buddha - (*Dīpaṅkara Buddha*) Buddha who is said to have brought Buddhism to Nepal

dom (Nep.) - service castes, contrast with *khas*

dwāre - village leader (prior to *pāncayat* system)

dyā: - deity, god

dyā: pālā - attendant to a god, particularly one whose responsibilities alternate with other attendants

gāi jātrā (Nep.) - (*sā punhī* Nw.) lit. "cow festival;" festival in honor of the dead

gajū - the metal pinnacle of a temple roof

gākhu - brakeman for the *rath* of Bungadya

Ganesh - (*Ganeśa* Skrt., *Ganay dyā*: Nw.) elephant-headed son of Shiva and Parvati

Garuda - (*Garuḍa*) the bird-like vehicle (*vāhana*) of Vishnu

ghar (Nep.) - (*chem* Nw.) house

ghī (Nep.) - clarified butter

ghya: - clarified butter

ghya:dewa - lamp fueled with *ghya*:

Gorkha - hill state in central Nepal from which Prithvinarayan conquered the Kathmandu valley

Gorkhalis - inhabitants of Gorkha; often used to refer to Nepali-speaking hill people (*Parbatiyā*)

gotra - among *Bāhun-Chetri*, refers to exogamous agnatic group which claims common descent from a mythical ancestor; among the Newar *gotra* identification is used almost exclusively for astrological calculations, and the Newar *gotra* is not exogamous

Gūnlā - the ninth month of the Newar year, and holiest month for Newar Buddhists

gurujuva paltan - honor guard attached to the king's priest, frequently present at the processions of important divinities

guthī - voluntary association, usually with religious function; membership is often, but not always, based on kinship, residence and/or caste identity

guthīyar - member of a *guthī*

gwa:jā - (*torma* Tib.) usually a small conically shaped lump of flour used in offerings

hamwakhīm - (shortened form of *hanumantakhīla*), "Hanuman post;" the posts used to support the *rath* of Bungadya while it is under construction

Hanuman - the "monkey god" who rescued Rama while engaged in battle with Lanka as recounted in the Ramayana

harkham dyā - mask form of Bhairab fixed with a spout in its mouth to allow rice beer to issue forth from a pot concealed behind

Hinayāna - "lesser path," referring to Theravadan Buddhism which has individual enlightenment and the attainment of Nirvana upon death as its principal goals, and stresses austerity and isolation from society in its practice

hiti - water spout

hwama pujā - fire sacrifice

ihi yāyegu, *ihi pujā* - ritual marriage of young girl to *beḥ* fruit symbolizing the Bodhicitta or Narayan depending upon the religious orientation of the initiate

jā - cooked rice

jajman - (Nep.) (*jayman* Nw.) usually used to refer to client who sponsors a *pujā*

jana - sacred cord

janai - (Nep.) sacred cord

jāt - endogamous caste group; indigenous term usually equated with caste; also used to refer to sub-castes which may be non-endogamous

jātrā - procession festival

jhal - blessed water

jhal pānju - *pānju* who sits to the right of Bungadya while the god is in his *rath*

jwalam - equipment, as in *pujā jwalam*

jogi - ascetic mendicant

jośi - astrologer; *jāt* whose traditional occupation is astrology

juju - king

iyā - work, labor

iyāpu - farmer caste; farmer

iyāpuni - female *iyāpu*

kalaś - ewer used ritually to contain deities after invoking their presence

kalpabṛikṣa (Skrt.) - celestial wish-granting tree

Kamarup - Assamese kingdom; (arch.) Assam

Kantipur - Kathmandu (arch.)

khajula - balcony-like deck surrounding shrine of *rath*

khal pānju - *panju* who sits to the left of Bungadya during the *jātrā*

khas (Nep.) - pure *Parbatīyā* castes, as opposed to *dom*

khicā bhu - "feast for the deities," held in Bungamati (see Appendix A)

khwalimali - small hand cymbals, usually thick and forged of brass or bronze, with high-pitched resonant ring

kikimpā - feather-like metal ornament offered to deities and often inserted in their crowns; may also be used as metonymic symbol of god

Koduwa - Kotwal *daha*, the gorge through which the Bagmati river flows out of the South of the Kathmandu valley

kul - clan

kumha - potter

Kumari (*Kumārī*) - human incarnation of goddess Taleju; though most famous is the young *Sākya* girl of Kathmandu linked with the king, there are several others in Kathmandu and other settlements in the valley; also used to refer to any virgin girl

kusle - yogin, *jogī*

kwāpā dīyā - principal publicly accessible god in a *bāhā* or *bañī*

lam - clothing

laysiwa puja - offerings made to a god or goddess who accepts sacrifice after a *puja* for which the participants had to fast, often performed after a *satwa puja*

lhapaṃ - equal contribution or share of obligation; contributions which support communal activity, i.e. *lhapaṃ bhwe* a feast funded through contributions from its participants

lhum - gold

lhusā - repoussé metal decorative pieces of *raths*

Licchavis - earliest known rulers of the Kathmandu valley for which there is clear historical evidence (A.D. 400 - 877 ?)

Lokeśwar - "lord of the world;" often used as an epithet for incarnations of *Avalokiteśvara* as well as other deities

mahā bali - "great sacrifice" (see Appendix A)

mahādip - large cotton torch fueled by oil, burned as ritual offering

mahayana (*mahāyana*) - "the great path;" (contrasted with *hinayana*), form of Buddhism which stresses the compassion of the Bodhisattva, one who has attained release from the cycle of rebirth but stays on earth to aid other beings

māiti (Nep.) - (*thāchem* Nw.) woman's natal household

Maju sima (*māju simā*) - tree shrine associated with Bungadya's mother

makhara - polymorphic deity often depicted on water spouts and occasionally as the vehicle of *nāgas*

Maleku (*Māleku*) - *Śreṣṭhā* sub-caste

mālīni - female maker of flower garlands; esp. female descendant of Lalita Jyapu

Malla - dynasty which ruled the Kathmandu valley 1200-1768; (lit. "wrestler" (Skt.)), a title assumed by many rulers in the sub-continent

Manandhar (Nep.) - (*saymi* Nw.), Newar oil presser *jāt*, also used as surname

maṇḍala - (*maṇḍap* Nw.) cosmic diagram, used as marker of seat of deity during rituals; also used as meditative device

matayā: - festival of lights (*matta*) in commemoration of the dead

matta - lamp

melā - festival

mha puja - "worship of self," Newar ritual performed on the first day of the Newar new year

mṛidanga - large double-headed drum with resonators, usually played by higher castes

mudra - ritual gesture, or position

Mulchowk - one of the main courtyards in the Patan Malla palace

muri - volumetric quantity equal to 2.4 bushels

mwā:li - double reeded shawm-like instrument

nāga - serpent deity associated with water and rain

nāgini (*nagini*) - female *nāga*

Nāmasaṃgīti- collection of hymns sung every morning in the presense of Būṅadya

Narayan (*Nārāyaṇ*) - alternate epithet for Vishnu

nāike - foreman, head (see *nāya*.)

nāya: - foreman, head

newa: - Newar

nhawan - bathing

nitya puṣā - daily rite

Niyekhu - Śreṣṭhā sub-caste; responsible for painting image of Bungadya

pahāri - "hill dweller," often used to refer to Nepali-speaking peoples in the hills

pālā - (also *pā*) turn, duty; used to refer to period of obligation

pālampā - by turn, by rotation of responsibility

palan - meal which breaks a fast

Panca Dhyani Buddhas (*Pāṇca Dhyani Buddhas*) - the five meditation Buddhas: *Amitābha*, *Akṣobhya*, *Vairocana*, *Amoghasiddhi*, and *Ratnasambhava*

pāncathare - "five thars", isogamous group of Śreṣṭhā sub-castes (cf. *cathare*)

pāncayat - representative system of government currently used in Nepal; district or zone represented in such a system

pāncopachāra - five-fold offering to a deity including flowers, incense, light, scent and food

pānista yayegu - to pacify, usually with ritual

pānju - one of thirty one *Vajrācāryas* and *Śākyas* of the Amarapur *saṃgha* in Bungamati who are entitled to serve as attendants to Bungadya, who is considered by them to be the thirty-second *pānju*

Parbatiyā (Nep.) - hill person; Nepali language

pāsā - friend

Pashupatinath (*Paśupatināth*) - most important Shaivite shrine in Nepal, located on the bank of the Bagmati river below Deopatan

patahā - banner, usually of cloth, offered to a deity

phalca - resthouse

phukī - lineage group which worships clan deity together

phukīpim - members of a *phukī*

prajñā (Skt.) - wisdom

prasād - (*parsād*, New.) item blessed by deity, usually received in exchange for offerings, may also be used to refer to any food consumed after *pujā* during feast

preta - ghost, spirit

pujā - any devotional act; ritual which is intended to engage divinity

pujārī - officiant at *pujā*

purnī - full moon

pūrṇīmā (Skt., Nep.) - (*purnī*, New.) full moon

purohit (Skt.) - priest

rāc̣has - demon (Skt. *rākṣasa*)

rājguru - the royal priest

rājguṭhī - royalty established *guṭhī*

rājkanikars - sweet makers, a Śreṣṭhā sub-caste

Rājopādhyay- Newar Brahmin

Rana - usually refers to the Rana Prime Ministers who usurped many of the prerogatives of the Nepalese throne from 1847-1951 and their numerous relatives

raṣṭra - national, country

raṣṭradevata (Skt.)- (*raṣṭradīyā*., Nw.) national guardian deity

rath - processional chariot

ratna - jewel

ropani - 0.13 acres

sāhit - auspicious moment

sāhit swayegu - to determine ("see") auspicious moment

sādhana - meditative process whereby adept visualizes, identifies with, and thereby achieves control over a deity

śakti - female consort; energy derived from union of male and female principles and/or partners

Śākya - one of the two high-caste Buddhist Newar castes who belong to *bāhā* or *bahī saṃgha*

salicā - saucer

samādhi - profound meditation

sambat - calendrical era; Nepal *sambat* 1 = 880 A.D., Bikram *sambat* 1 = 57 B.C.

sanaguthī - funereal association

sandhābhāṣā - intentional language of tantric texts

saṃgha - in Newar Buddhism refers to initiated members of community of *Vajrācāryas* and/or *Śākyas* who receive initiation in the same *bāhā* or *bahī*; elsewhere used to refer to a monastic Buddhist community

sanlū - first day of each month of the solar calendar

sannhū - see *sanlū*

sannyasin - ascetic mendicant who has rejected caste and society

śanti puḍā, *śanti yāye* - pacification ritual

Śantipur - shrine to *Śanti ācārya*, original *Vajrācārya* initiate, at Swayambhu

saptavidhānuttara puḍā - the *puḍā* of the supreme seven-fold manner of devotion

Saraswati - goddess of knowledge

sata - resthouse

satwa: puḍā - see *saptavidhānuttara puḍā*

Sesya - Newari term used to cover range of sub-castes of upper-caste Hindu Newars, many of whom wear the sacred thread; usually used as general term of reference

Seto Matsyendranath - (*Seto Matsyendranāth*) alternative epithet for Janmadya of Jana Baha in Kathmandu

sīguthī - funeral *guthī*

Silpakar - carpenter sub-caste

sindur (sindur) - (*sinha*: colored powder used for ritual offerings and *tikas*)

singha - (also *simgha*) lion

Śivamārgī - devotee of Shiva

śraddha - death commemorative rite, also performed in conjunction with funerals

Śreṣṭhācārya - Hindu priest, often associated with deities which accept sacrifice, performs tantric rites

stotra - hymn

subba - officer, chief official; head of regional office of the *Guthī Samsthān* who oversees the festival of Bungadya

suwā: - *jyāpu* sub-caste associated with cooking

tāgādhārī - wearer of the sacred cord of the high-caste Hindu

Taleju - tutelary divinity of Malla kings, adopted by Shah dynasty

Tamrakar - (*Tamwa*:) artisan sub-caste associated with tin-smithing

tantra - tantric literature; body of tantric beliefs or practices

tantric - that which is based on the premises of tantrism; may refer to literature, ritual, belief, deities, or practitioners; may also refer to practices, often referred to as "left handed," which include ritual intercourse, certain forms of sacrifice, and other acts which defy social conventions and are often cloaked in secrecy

tantrism - that school of thought which is based on the fundamental premise that release from the cycle of rebirth may be achieved in one lifetime through ritual practice in which the practitioner achieves mastery of divine power by emulating a divinity through a meditative process of visualization called *sādhana*

Tara (*Tārā*) - benevolent goddess, conceived of as consorts of the five Bodhisattvas who emanated from the *Pāncadhyāni* Buddhas, especially *Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi Lokeśwar*.

tarbar - ceremonial sword

thāchem - paternal home of a woman

thakāli - eldest

Thakuri (*Thakuri*) - a *Chetri* caste group which includes the royal Shaha family

thār - broadly used term, used to refer to caste, sub-caste, or clan name, most often refers to the equivalent of the western surname, or the second name by which one refers to oneself

theravada - (also *hinayana*) - "lesser path", referring to school of Buddhism which has individual enlightenment and the attainment of nirvana upon death as its principal goals, and stresses austerity and isolation from society in its practice

thwam - rice beer

tika - colored mark placed on forehead, usually during the course of worship, though women also wear tika as a cosmetic decoration

tol (Nep.) - (*twa*: New.), neighborhood

Tuladhar - merchant sub-caste of the *Urāy*; also refers to the offspring of a *Sākya* or *Vajrācārya* man and Tibetan woman, or uninitiated *Sākya* (i.e. adult who did not undergo *Bare chuyegu*)

tutta - hymn (*stotra*, Skrt.)

twā: - neighborhood

urāy - Buddhist trading sub-castes, including some artisan sub-castes; occasionally used in the literature to refer to artisan castes

vāhana - vehicle of a god

vaiṣṇava - devotee of Vishnu; tradition which celebrates the eminence of Vishnu

vajra - emblem or implement representing the clarity, permanence, purity, and strength of the adamant way, i.e. Vajrayana Buddhism, said to symbolize a lightening bolt and/or diamond

Vajrācārya - the highest of the Buddhist Newar castes, who may serve others as priests in performing the fire sacrifice

vajrayana (*vajrayāna*) - tantric school of Buddhism which stresses the achievement of release and empowerment through ritual means

vamśāvali - chronical

varṇa - one of the four fundamental divisions in "Hindu" society

Vikram Sambat - the official calendrical system used in Nepal; *Vikram sambat* 1 = 57 B.C.

yā: - *jātrā*, procession festival

yangwal - clan of *jyāpus* who lash *rath* pieces together in building *rath* and are the only ones entitled to stand on the *rath*'s spire

yāyegu - to do

Yela - Patan

Yelem - in Patan

Yogambara (*Yogāmbara*) - tantric deity, frequently portrayed in coitus with his consort *Jyanidakini* *Yogambara*, and frequently the *āgaṃ dyā:* in *bāhās*; *Jyanidakini* *Yogambara*

yomari - sweet-filled bread